

DIPLOMATIC BLUEBOOK

2025



Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan

Diplomatic Bluebook 2025

Japanese Diplomacy and
International Situation in 2024

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan

Preface to the Diplomatic Bluebook 2025

The international situation is currently challenging, with Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the situation in the Middle East, and the security environment in East Asia. The year 2024 also saw key elections in the United States and other parts of the world. Amid this global turbulence, diplomacy is becoming more important than ever before. While giving the highest priority to protecting the lives and property of Japanese citizens, Japanese diplomacy has a responsibility to uphold a free and open international order based on the rule of law and contribute to peace, stability, and prosperity in the region and the international community, grounded in the trust that Japan has built as a peace-loving nation. As Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs, I will actively advance "diplomacy of dialogue and cooperation" based on the following three pillars.

The first is enhancing and strengthening the Japan-U.S. Alliance. The Japan-U.S. Alliance is the cornerstone of Japan's foreign policy and security. We will strive to build a strong relationship of trust with the Trump administration and elevate the Japan-U.S. Alliance to even greater heights.

The second is cooperating with allies and like-minded countries to realize a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)." With the existing international order under challenge, Japan will work to uphold a free and open international order based on the rule of law, together with the G7, Australia, India, the Republic of Korea, Southeast Asian countries, Pacific Island countries, and others.

The third is working with developing and emerging countries, known as the Global South. At a time when the international community is becoming increasingly divided and confrontational, Japan will all the more work closely with not only its ally and like-minded countries, including the G7, but also the Global South, and take the lead in strengthening the international order.

Japanese diplomacy has a mission to steer the world toward reconciliation and cooperation, rather than division and confrontation. Through various diplomatic opportunities, I will continue to steadily build personal relationships with my counterparts and engage in multilayered and multifaceted cooperation with our global partners to enhance the presence of Japanese diplomacy.

The Diplomatic Bluebook 2025 primarily presents an overview of the international situation and Japanese diplomatic initiatives in 2024. It begins with an Opening Special Feature focusing on three international meetings that Japan hosted on cooperation with Global South countries, which are important partners for the future of the international community. 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: "Japan's Foreign Policy by Region"; "Japan's Foreign Policy to Promote National and Global Interests"; 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 protecting Japan's national interests in a rapidly changing international situation, while addressing various challenges facing the international community.

Minister for Foreign Affairs
IWAYA Takeshi



In principle, Diplomatic Bluebook 2025 describes an overview of the international affairs and Japan's diplomatic activities from January 1 to December 31 of 2024; however, some important events that occurred until early 2025 are also included.

Chapters 1 to 4 offer overviews of Japan's diplomatic activities throughout 2024 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 2025 in French and Spanish are also due to be available on the website by autumn 2025.

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



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Opening Special Feature

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Opening Special Feature

Defending National Interests through Co-Creation with the World

Cooperation with Global Partners



▲Commemorative photo at the Japan-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Summit (October 10, Vientiane, Laos; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

▼Prime Minister Ishiba speaking at the Japan-ASEAN Summit (October 10, Vientiane, Laos; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)



Japan has worked to address the challenges and support the development of numerous developing countries over many years. Today, these countries have a major presence in the world as the “Global South” and are growing into key partners for shouldering the future of the international community. Looking ahead, it is essential for Japan to cooperate with global partners, including the developing and emerging countries that make up the “Global South,” in order to uphold the free and open international order based on the rule of law, tackle global challenges, protect Japan’s own peace and security, and drive economic growth.

In 2024, as divisions and confrontations deepened in the international community over the situations in Ukraine and Gaza, and the security environment surrounding Japan became increasingly severe, Japan actively worked to collaborate not only with its ally and like-minded countries but also with the Global South to guide the international community toward reconciliation and cooperation.

As an example, the “officials in charge of cross-border economic affairs” have been designated at some diplomatic missions overseas to further support Japanese companies in their business expansion across borders, thereby contributing to the resolution of social issues in the Global South while also connecting that dynamism to Japan’s economic growth.

In addition, Japan supported developing countries with the Co-creation for common agenda initiative⁽¹⁾ and Official Development Assistance (ODA) that mobilizes private-sector funds, which were newly set forth in the 2023 Development Cooperation Charter. Japan also actively promoted cooperation through Official Security Assistance (OSA), established in 2023 with the expectation of creating a desirable security environment for Japan by enhancing the security and deterrence capabilities of like-minded countries.

This feature introduces the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM10), the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) Ministerial Meeting, and the Japan-CARICOM Ministerial-Level Conference, all of which were hosted by Japan in 2024 as part of its cooperation with global partners, particularly the Global South.



▲Prime Minister Ishiba speaking at the G20 Rio de Janeiro Summit (November 18, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

▼The 5th Japan-Arab Economic Forum Ministerial Conference (July 11, Iikura Guest House, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo)



(1) Co-creation for common agenda initiative: A new initiative in which Japan proposes appealing cooperation menus that leverage Japan’s strengths and combine ODA, Other Official Flows (OOF), and private sector funds in the areas that should be strategically addressed from a foreign policy perspective.



PALM10: The 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting

What is the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting?

The Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM) is a summit held every three years since 1997 with the aim of facilitating candid discussions at the summit level on the various issues faced by Pacific Island countries and regions, contributing to regional stability and prosperity, and strengthening the partnership between Japan and the Pacific Islands countries region.

PALM10: Themes and Overview

- PALM10 was held in Tokyo from July 16 to 18. Under the co-chairmanship of Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Mark Brown of the Cook Islands (Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)), there was participation by leaders and others from 19 countries and regions, including Japan, 14 Pacific Island countries,⁽¹⁾ two French territories,⁽²⁾ Australia, and New Zealand, as well as the PIF Secretary General.
- Discussions centered around the seven areas outlined in the PIF's "2050 Strategy": (1) Political Leadership and Regionalism, (2) People-Centered Development, (3) Peace and Security, (4) Resources and Economic Development, (5) Climate Change and Disasters, (6) Ocean and Environment, and (7) Technology and Connectivity, as well as regional and international affairs.



Commemorative photo of PALM10: Prime Minister Kishida and participants (July 18, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)



- Based on these discussions, Japan and the Pacific Island countries and regions reaffirmed their relationship to “stride forward together” toward the future while tackling common challenges, and adopted “The 10th Pacific

Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM10) Japan – Pacific Islands Forum Leaders’ Declaration” along with its annex titled “PALM10 Joint Action Plan.”



Prime Minister Kishida at the opening session (July 18, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

- (1) Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu
- (2) French Polynesia, New Caledonia



Marking the milestone of the 10th summit, this occasion enabled Japan and the Pacific Island countries and regions to elevate their trust and cooperative relations to a new level in order to address contemporary challenges, and to present determination and a concrete path to “stride forward together” into the future.

◀ Prime Minister Kishida at the joint press conference (July 18, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

Key Discussion Points by Sector

(1) Political Leadership and Regionalism	• PIF leaders welcomed Japan's respect for the Pacific region's determination to act with unity and solidarity in its engagement and advocacy with partners • Both sides concurred on continuing to strengthen their partnership, including ensuring the appropriate level of representation and the realization of ambitious outcomes at the annual Pacific Islands Forum Dialogue Partners meeting and PALM-related meetings
(2) People-Centered Development	• Confirmation of expansion of cooperation in the fields of education and health to protect and enhance “human dignity,” and on fostering people-to-people exchanges and human resource development through various programs
(3) Peace and Security	• Commitment to oppose all wars of aggression and to pursue permanent and sustainable peace consistent with the purposes and principles of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations • Expression of strong opposition to attempts to unilaterally change the status quo through the threat or use of force or coercion
(4) Resources and Economic Development	• Reaffirmation that transparent and fair development finance and the maintenance of correspondent banking relationships are essential to achieve sustainable and resilient economic development • Confirmation of promotion of efforts by Japan such as business matching, including with startup companies, and fostering local industries
(5) Climate Change and Disasters	• Announcement of the “Pacific Climate Resilience Initiative,” a concerted national effort mobilizing Japan's technology, know-how, and financial resources based on three pillars: (a) Strengthening disaster risk reduction and response capabilities, (b) Promoting clean energy, and (c) Supporting Pacific-led efforts
(6) Ocean and Environment	• Reaffirmation of commitment to a free, open, and sustainable maritime order based on the rule of law and in accordance with international law • Expression of commitment to jointly address illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing
(7) Technology and Connectivity	• Welcoming of Japan's cooperation to enhance connectivity across land, sea, air, and digital space through the development of “quality infrastructure,” including subsea cables. Confirmation of the importance of countering the spread of disinformation

Bilateral Meetings and Other Events with Pacific Island Countries and Regions

During PALM10, Prime Minister Kishida held 17 summit meetings and other meetings with leaders of Pacific Island countries and regions. In addition, prior to the summit, a welcome reception was held by Chief Cabinet Secretary HAYASHI Yoshimasa and his spouse on July 16, and a banquet was held by Prime Minister Kishida and his spouse on July 17. The banquet featured

dishes prepared with ingredients from Ishikawa Prefecture to support reconstruction efforts of the areas affected by the earthquake in the Noto region, as well as a Japanese “summer festival” that embodied people-to-people exchanges. These events served as an opportunity to reaffirm the *kizuna* (bonds) between Japan and the Pacific Island countries and regions.



◀ Banquet hosted by Prime Minister Kishida and his spouse (July 17, State Guest House, Akasaka Palace, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

▶ Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka of Fiji visiting the stall of a Japanese confectioner from Ishikawa Prefecture at the “summer festival” (July 17, State Guest House, Akasaka Palace, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)





Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) Ministerial Meeting

What is TICAD?

The Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) is an international conference on African development launched by Japan in 1993. It supports African development based on the fundamental principles of “ownership” by Africa and “partnership” with the international community, including Japan.

2024 TICAD Ministerial Meeting — Theme and Overview —

- The TICAD Ministerial Meeting was held in Tokyo from August 24 to 25. Foreign Minister Kamikawa co-chaired the meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Mauritanians Abroad of Mauritania Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug, who is also the Chair of the African Union (AU). A total of 47 African countries participated, along with representatives from international organizations, private companies, members of Japan’s Diet, and civil society groups.
- Under the theme “Co-create innovative solutions with Africa,” and looking ahead toward TICAD 9 in 2025, discussions were held on the three pillars of society, peace and stability, and economy, which were underpinned by three perspectives: future-oriented problem solving, emphasis on youth and women, and the connectivity and knowledge platforms.



Opening ceremony of the 2024 TICAD Ministerial Meeting (August 24, Tokyo)

- Many innovative solutions were shared, including at the six theme-based related meetings and three multi-lateral meetings (in working lunch format). Participants concurred on expanding these solutions and ideas

across Africa and further contributing to solving global challenges. The “TICAD Ministerial Meeting Joint Communiqué” was adopted as the outcome document.



Bon Odori dancing at the TICAD Ministerial Meeting welcome reception (August 24, Tokyo)



Closing session of the TICAD Ministerial Meeting (August 25, Tokyo)



Foreign Minister Kamikawa serving as co-chair (August 24, Tokyo)

With the aim of co-creating solutions to African challenges jointly between Japan and Africa, we want to develop “Made with Japan” cooperation that contributes to solving African issues through innovative approaches, while utilizing local Japanese technologies and the ideas of young people!

Bilateral Meetings with African Countries

During the TICAD Ministerial Meeting, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held 33 meetings, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUJI Kiyoto held 10 meetings, and Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs FUKAZAWA Yoichi held 3 meetings with representatives of African countries and organizations. Through these

meetings, they exchanged views on bilateral relations and cooperation in the international arena, including UN Security Council (UNSC) reform. Many representatives from countries and organizations expressed their gratitude for Japan’s contributions to Africa through the TICAD process.

Overview of Each Session

Session 1 Society: “Realizing a Sustainable Future”	• Confirmation of the need for exchanges and cooperation between Japanese and African youth • Sharing of useful ideas for solving various social issues such as strengthening health systems and environmental and climate change measures
Session 2 Peace and Stability: “Ensuring Human Dignity and Human Security”	• Confirmation of the importance of Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) • Announcement of the launch of the “Women’s Peace Human Resource Development Initiative in the Horn of Africa” • Confirmation of the importance of conflict prevention; addressing root causes of conflict; a cross-sectoral approach through humanitarian aid, development, and peace cooperation; good governance; and strengthening the rule of law • Confirmation of the need for UN Security Council reform to properly reflect African voices
Session 3 Economy: “Promoting Trade and Investment”	• There was participation by approximately 400 people from both the public and private sectors, including about 70 companies. Focus was placed on startups from both Japan and Africa, with Part 1 being a panel discussion and Part 2 a networking session • In Part 1, discussions were held on support for building startup ecosystems. The African side expressed high appreciation for TICAD and private-sector-led digital transformation (DX), while the corporate side expressed expectations for improvement of the business environment in Africa • Part 2 brought together African ministers and business representatives from both Japan and Africa, providing new business opportunities



Japan-Mauritania Foreign Ministers’ Meeting (August 24, Tokyo)



The Eighth Japan-CARICOM Ministerial-Level Conference



What is CARICOM (Caribbean Community)?

CARICOM is a regional organization composed of 14 countries and one region,⁽¹⁾ mainly consisting of former British Caribbean colonies. The member states are diverse, ranging from the Bahamas, which has a relatively high GDP per capita, to Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Despite this diversity, the member states all share vulnerabilities as small island states to natural disasters and external economic fluctuations, and they often act in coordination in the international arena. Japan has promoted dialogue and cooperation with CARICOM based on the three pillars of its CARICOM policy: “Cooperation towards sustainable development, including overcoming the vulnerabilities particular to small island states;” “Deepening and expanding fraternal bonds of cooperation and friendship;” and “Cooperation in the international arena.”

The Eighth Japan-CARICOM Ministerial-Level Conference: Objectives and Outcomes

- The year 2024 was celebrated as “Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024,” as it marked the 30th anniversary of the start of the Japan-CARICOM Consultations, as well as the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and both Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. (See the Column on page 115.) At the end of the year, Japan held the Eighth Japan-CARICOM Ministerial-Level Conference in Tokyo in December, inviting the foreign ministers and other officials from CARICOM member states.⁽²⁾ This was the first Ministerial-Level Conference held in Tokyo in 10 years.
- At the meeting, Japan expressed its determination to expand cooperation with CARICOM member states as partners in addressing global challenges based on the “three pillars of Japan’s CARICOM policy,” amid the increasingly severe international situation and global challenges surrounding Japan and CARICOM. Japan stated that under the “Diplomatic Initiative toward Latin America and the Caribbean,” it will build new forms of cooperation in fields that are becoming increasingly important, particularly maritime issues, disaster risk reduction, climate change, and human security. The CARICOM member states expressed their support of these views.

(1) Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Montserrat (British Overseas Territory).

(2) Countries and other participants in the Eighth Japan-CARICOM Ministerial-Level Conference (in alphabetical order): Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and the CARICOM Secretariat.



Reception for the Eighth Japan-CARICOM Ministerial-Level Conference
(December 12, Iikura Guest House, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo)



Foreign Minister Iwaya, Foreign Minister Vince Henderson of Dominica (Co-chair, front left), and foreign ministers of CARICOM member states at the joint press conference (December 14, Tokyo)

Overview of the Ministerial Joint Statement between Japan and CARICOM

General Overview	• Reaffirmation of collaboration under a global partnership based on shared values and principles • Expression of determination to expand and deepen cooperation under the “three pillars of Japan’s CARICOM policy” in order to co-create solutions to new challenges faced by Japan and CARICOM, such as challenges to the international order and the intensification of global issues • Confirmation of the importance of regular high-level political dialogue between Japan and CARICOM.
First pillar: Cooperation towards sustainable development, including overcoming the vulnerabilities particular to small island developing states	• Reaffirmation of Japan’s active participation in discussions in the international arena regarding the vulnerabilities particular to small island developing states • Expression and confirmation of both sides’ positions on the preservation of baselines and maritime zones in the face of sea level rise; a comprehensive approach to financing for development that considers various factors, not limited to per capita income; and support through the Japan-CARICOM Friendship and Cooperation Fund • Under Japan’s Diplomatic Initiative toward Latin America and the Caribbean, Japan will continue cooperation in new and existing fields, such as oceanic affairs; climate change; food security; and Women, Peace and Security (WPS)
Second pillar: Deepening and expanding fraternal bonds of cooperation and friendship	• Confirmation of further strengthening of mutual understanding and friendly relations • Confirmation of appreciation and continuation of people-to-people exchanges, and the importance of people-to-people exchanges at all levels • Agreement to cooperate to promote the participation of CARICOM member states in Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan
Third pillar: Cooperation in addressing challenges of the international community	• Confirmation of the recognition that unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion, as well as economic coercion, are unacceptable anywhere in the world, and that such challenges to the international order are a shared concern for Japan and CARICOM • Reaffirmation of the commitment to realize a world without nuclear weapons • Confirmation of the necessity of reforming the UN Security Council, including the expansion of both permanent and non-permanent membership categories • Confirmation of close cooperation on climate change • Confirmation of the importance of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) • Confirmation of the importance of the sustainable use of marine living resources, and that illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing is one of the most serious threats to this; the prompt entry into force of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement of the WTO, and maintenance of the freedom of navigation and overflight consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) • Sharing of serious concerns about North Korea and confirmation of the need for the immediate resolution of the abductions issue • Confirmation of the importance of Japan’s support for Haiti

- In addition, the member states concurred that unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion constitute a challenge to the international order based on the rule of law, which is the common foundation of peace and prosperity, and that no country can remain unaffected, making it necessary for Japan and CARICOM member states to cooperate in responding. Furthermore, they affirmed their cooperation toward shared goals in fields such as nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, reform of the UN Security Council, and climate change.



Courtesy call on Prime Minister Ishiba by foreign ministers of CARICOM member states (December 13, Tokyo; Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

- Following the conference, the participating countries adopted the Ministerial Joint Statement between Japan and CARICOM as an outcome document. Furthermore, the countries signed and exchanged notes on “The Project for Industrial Development and Technology Transfer in the Member States of the Caribbean Community (in cooperation with UNIDO),”⁽³⁾ grant aid totaling 730 million Japanese yen to be provided to the 14 CARICOM member states.



Foreign Minister Iwaya serving as Chair (December 14, Tokyo)

Bilateral Meetings with CARICOM Member States

On the occasion of the CARICOM Ministerial-Level Conference, Foreign Minister Iwaya held bilateral meetings with the foreign ministers of 12 CARICOM member states who visited Japan. In addition, State Minister for Foreign Affairs MIYAJI Takuma held meetings with vice minister-level officials of two countries and a representative of the CARICOM Secretariat. The ministerial level conference and bilateral meetings strengthened multilayered relations between Japan and CARICOM member states.



▲Japan-Jamaica Foreign Ministers' Meeting (December 12, Tokyo)

▼Japan-Trinidad and Tobago Foreign Ministers' Meeting (December 14, Tokyo)



(3) Grant aid (totaling 730 million yen) that supports the provision of equipment using Japanese companies' technologies in fields such as water and agribusiness, the invitation of investment officials, and technical cooperation in industrial fields. This cooperation is expected to contribute to overcoming the vulnerabilities of CARICOM member states, with the aim of addressing development challenges and promoting industrial diversification by utilizing the expertise of Japan and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

Chapter 1 Overview of the International Situation and Outlook for Japan's Diplomacy

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 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

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, as well as the rules-based economic order, with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core. 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 of 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 strengthening resilience of supply chains for critical materials including 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, there is an urgent need to address global challenges including environmental issues like climate change, global health, disaster risk reduction, and issues such as nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and terrorism and transnational organized crime. In recent

years, informatization and digitization have made these issues widely recognized throughout the world, but these issues cannot be solved by any one major power alone, and cooperation within the international community is more important 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 realistic. These developments show the complexity of 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 foundations of the international order that had supported peace, stability, and prosperity in the post-Cold War era. In the Middle East, the entire region has become unstable after the terror attacks against Israel by Hamas and others in October 2023, making the axis of confrontation in the international community, particularly over the situation in Gaza, more complex. It is difficult to say that the United Nations (UN), including its Security Council, is adequately fulfilling the expected roles in the face of various issues caused by serious humanitarian crises and conflicts. Some countries, including the Global South, are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the existing global governance⁽¹⁾ system. This has led to a serious division in the international community.

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 the 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, in 2024, important elections, including the U.S. presidential election, were held in various parts of the world, and there were also cases of severe domestic divisions and political tensions in several countries. The international community going forward will face the challenge of building global governance in which all countries, including the Global South, share responsibility in

order to overcome divisions and surmount the common challenges of all humanity.

With the above recognition, 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 foundations 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 the use of nuclear weapons, but the international community must firmly reject Russia's threat to use nuclear weapons, let alone any use of nuclear weapons. The achievement of a just and lasting peace in Ukraine is essential to upholding the rule of law in the international community.

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, as they pose a challenge to the international order based on the rule of law itself. In East Asia, including the area surrounding Japan, North Korea has been advancing its nuclear and missile development, including the launches of 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, including the waters surrounding the Senkaku Islands, and the South China Sea, as well as a series of military activities around Japan. The security environment

⁽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 governing bodies unlike the domestic system.

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.

In addition, moves to advance Russia-North Korea military cooperation have been revealed, including the engagement of North Korean troops in combat against Ukraine, as well as Russia's procurement and use of North Korean weapons and munitions, including ballistic missiles. Japan is seriously concerned about these moves which not only lead to further deterioration of the situation in Ukraine, but also affect the security of the region surrounding Japan.

In order to achieve stability in the Indo-Pacific region, first of all, it is essential that the United States maintains and strengthens its commitment to the region. It is necessary for Japan to foster the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance and the credibility and resilience of extended deterrence.⁽²⁾ The cooperation with like-minded countries that share values, such as the G7, Australia, India, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Southeast Asian countries, and the Pacific Island countries, is also important. Furthermore, from the perspective that the security of the Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic is inseparable, it is also important to cooperate with like-minded partners, including European countries, the European Union (EU), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

At the G7 Apulia Summit, the G7 stated that they seek constructive and stable relations with China and recognize the importance of direct and candid engagement to express concerns and manage differences. They also expressed that they continue to engage in areas of common interest, and called on China to step up efforts to promote international peace and security.

At the same time, between Japan and China, it is necessary, as two countries that have a responsibility for the peace and prosperity of the region and the international community, to comprehensively promote a "Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests" and to make joint efforts to build "constructive and stable Japan-China relations."

(2) Challenges Posed to Global Governance and Global Issues 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. With developing and emerging countries becoming aware of these changes, the world has witnessed moves among the Global South to increase their unity. It is not appropriate to treat the Global South as a single entity, since the geopolitical position, economic situation, and challenges they face vary from country to country.

Against this backdrop, in recent years, there is growing dissatisfaction with the existing rules and systems of the international community, particularly among the Global South, over situations such as when the UN Security Council, which has primary responsibility for peace and security of the international community, has not necessarily been fulfilling its expected roles in response to the situations in Ukraine and the Middle-East due to the exercise of vetoes by permanent members.

Global challenges such as environmental issues including climate change, disaster risk reduction, and global health including infectious diseases, are becoming graver. In order to bridge the funding gap faced by developing countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there is a growing call for reforms in Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs).

In this context, the Summit of the Future was held in New York, U.S. in September to restore trust in the UN and effectively respond to the SDGs and new challenges through international cooperation. In the negotiation process, there were conflicts of interest between developed countries and developing and emerging countries, but in the end, "the Pact for the Future," which reflects the calls for strengthening the functions of the UN, including reform of the UN Security Council, and sets out 56 actions to protect the needs and interests of present and future generations, was adopted by consensus. This is the first time that the heads of the world jointly highlighted the urgent

⁽²⁾ Providing deterrence that a country possesses to its allies and partners. Japan possesses its own deterrence, while also receiving extended deterrence from its ally, the U.S.

need for reforming the UN Security Council, calling for concrete actions to be taken going forward.

While the multilateral systems centered on the UN face difficulties, cooperation among allies and like-minded countries such as the G7, Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad), Japan-U.S.-ROK, Japan-U.S.-Australia, and Japan-U.S.-Philippines, is becoming increasingly important. 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 conflicts 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 Development of Science and Technology

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 global interdependence is further deepening.

In this context, in recent years, the vulnerabilities of food and energy 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 economic coercion. This shows that in an era when complete decoupling is no longer possible, economic globalization and interdependence can bring not only 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 the economy and technology. In light of such demands of today, there is growing international interest in economic security.

In order to address economic coercion and non-market policies and practices and to maintain and expand the rules-based free and fair international economic order, it is also becoming increasingly important

to strengthen the multilateral trading system with the 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 environment, human rights, and gender equality with the achievement of SDGs in mind, while aiming for economic growth.

Turning to scientific and technological developments, technological innovations such as 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. 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 bias⁽³⁾ through social media has made it more difficult to form public opinion based on correct information and sound debate.

That peace and development in the international community now cannot be achieved solely through the development of globalization and interdependence is evident under the current international situation. In order to utilize free economic activities, science and technology, and innovation for a better future for humankind, cooperation for appropriate risk management and fair governance is important.

(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)

2 Outlook for Japan's Diplomacy

The international situation remains severe with Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the situation in the Middle East, and the security environment in East Asia. While the free and open international order based on the rule of law is under serious challenges throughout the world including in the Indo-Pacific region, the Global South is enhancing its presence, and the international community is diversifying. In addition, some countries are experiencing increasing domestic divisions and political tensions. Multilateralism with the UN as its core faces difficulties, but there are a host of global issues including climate change and new threats such as cyberattacks and information manipulation, including the spread of disinformation, which need to be addressed by the international community as a whole, thus calling for cooperation among nations more than ever before.

In the international community at this turning point in history, Japan must 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 leads the world toward reconciliation and cooperation from division and confrontation.

Japan has consistently followed the path of a peace-loving nation since the end of World War II, contributing to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the international community including the Asia-Pacific region, 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⁽⁴⁾ and worked

toward the resolution of global issues, including the achievement of SDGs, through capacity building support and other measures. It has also actively contributed to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and international peacebuilding efforts. As the world reaches a turning point in history, Japan will continue to conduct proactive diplomacy based on the trust that it gained through these diplomatic efforts.

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

A 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 of the Indo-Pacific. In February 2025, Prime Minister Ishiba visited the U.S. and concurred with U.S. President Donald J. Trump, who took office in January of the same year, to work closely to realize a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" and to elevate the Japan-U.S. Alliance to new heights.

On the security front, Japan and the U.S. will further strengthen deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance, strengthen the credibility and resilience of extended deterrence, and optimize the response capabilities of U.S. forces in Japan. Japan will also promote efforts to mitigate impact on local communities, including Okinawa, through efforts of expeditiously relocating Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma to Henoko while maintaining the stable presence of U.S. forces.

On the economic front, Japan and the U.S. will further expand and deepen broad Japan-U.S. collaboration in the economic field, including efforts to increase investment between Japan and the U.S., partnership in advanced technology, and cooperation for sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the Indo-Pacific region. The two countries will also further strengthen their multilayered people-to-people exchanges.

Through these efforts, Japan will strive to build a strong relationship of trust with the Trump administration and further deepen Japan-U.S. relations. At the

⁽⁴⁾ 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.

same time, Japan will continue to communicate with the Trump administration on the various issues facing the international community and make its contribution.

B Cooperation with Allies and Like-minded Countries

The realization of FOIP, which upholds the core principles of defending “freedom” and “the rule of law” and respecting “diversity,” “inclusiveness,” and “openness,” is one of the most important tasks for Japanese diplomacy. In order to realize FOIP, it is important to build and expand networks with allies and like-minded countries, in addition to the Japan-U.S. Alliance. To this end, Japan will further expand practical cooperation among Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad), Japan-U.S.-ROK, Japan-U.S.-Australia, and Japan-U.S.-Philippines, the G7, as well as with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Australia, India, the ROK, the EU, NATO, and others.

The G7 is working closely to address the various issues facing the international community, such as Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the situation in the Middle East. As the security of Europe, the Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific becomes increasingly intertwined, Japan will contribute to the further strengthening of cooperation among the G7 in order to maintain and strengthen the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

With Australia, as a central pillar of the coordination among like-minded countries, Japan has established a close cooperative relationship in a wide range of fields. The two countries will work to further deepen their “Special Strategic Partnership,” including by strengthening security cooperation, in fields such as cyber and economic security.

With the EU and NATO, Japan will further strengthen security cooperation based on the recognition that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions is inseparable and in light of the progress made in cooperation in recent years.

In addition to Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) and Japan-U.S.-ROK, the first-ever Japan-U.S.-Philippines Summit was held in 2024, and Japan is strengthening the multilayered cooperation with like-minded countries. Japan will continue to strengthen such multilayered cooperation in the future.

C Japan's Own Efforts

As Japan faces the most severe and complex security environment since the end of World War II, it will work to improve its response capabilities in cybersecurity, as well as promote the transfer of defense equipment and Official Security Assistance (OSA) program, under the National Security Strategy.

In addition, in countering the threat of terrorism and violent extremism, as well as transnational organized crime, including cybercrime, Japan will continue its efforts and international contribution.

On economic security, Japan will also continue to work on enhancing supply chain resilience, addressing economic coercion, and protecting and promoting critical and emerging technologies, in close coordination with its ally and like-minded countries.

In response to international information warfare, such as the spread of disinformation, Japan will strengthen its capabilities to collect and analyze information, and ensure timely and appropriate dissemination, while building and reinforcing its information security infrastructure. At the same time, Japan will provide information to gain the understanding and support of the Japanese public for its foreign policy by intensifying communication through social networking services (SNS) and other means.

(2) Relations with Neighboring Countries and others

Japan will build stable relations with neighboring countries, while dealing head-on with difficult issues.

A Japan-China Relations

While there are various potentials for improved ties between Japan and China, there are a number of issues and concerns, such as unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force in the East China Sea, including the situation surrounding the Senkaku Islands, and the South China Sea, and a series of military activities around Japan, 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 share significant responsibility for the peace and prosperity of

the region and the world. Under a broad direction of comprehensively promoting a “Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests” and building “constructive and stable Japan-China relations,” Japan and China should make joint efforts to reduce issues and concerns, and increase cooperation and coordination.

B Japan-Republic of Korea (ROK) Relations

The ROK is an important neighbor which should work as a partner on challenges in the international community. In light of the current strategic environment, the importance of Japan-ROK relations remains unchanged. Japan continues working closely together bilaterally with the ROK and trilaterally with the U.S. and the ROK, including on policies toward North Korea.

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

Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Cooperation is important for regional and global peace and prosperity from a broad perspective. Japan will continue to steadily advance this framework as the chair country.

D North Korea

North Korea's nuclear and missile development is totally unacceptable. Japan is also seriously concerned about the moves to advance the Russia-North Korea military cooperation such as the deployment of North Korean troops to Russia, including the recent developments, and Russia's procurement and use of weapons and munitions including ballistic missiles from North Korea, given their impact not only on the situation in Ukraine but also on the security of the region surrounding Japan. Japan will work closely with the international community toward the full implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

Japan's basic policy remains unchanged: Japan will achieve the normalization of relations with North Korea, in accordance with the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, by 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 abductees and their families, the abductions issue is a time-sensitive, humanitarian issue with no time to spare, as well as a matter of infringement of the sovereignty of Japan in nature. In order to realize the return of all abductees at the earliest possible date and resolve the outstanding issues of concern between Japan and North Korea, Japan will spare no effort in taking the most effective measures toward that goal.

(3) Response to Russia's 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 use, let alone its use, are inadmissible. In order to stop Russia's aggression against Ukraine and achieve a just and lasting peace as quickly as possible, Japan will work in close cooperation with the international community, including the G7, to strongly promote support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia. Japan will also strengthen its efforts to support Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction, through collaboration between both the public and private sectors.

While Japan-Russia relations continue to face a difficult situation, it is unacceptable to shift the responsibility onto Japan. Japan will continue to take a firm stance against unilateral disseminations and measures taken by Russia. At the same time, there are pending issues between Japan and Russia that need to be addressed by both countries as neighbors, thus it is essential to communicate appropriately with the Russian side. Japan will firmly maintain its policy of concluding a peace treaty through the resolution of the Northern Territories issue. Regarding the resumption of the Four-Island Exchange and Visit Program, which is one of its top priorities, Japan will continue to strongly urge the Russian side to resume the program, with particular focus on visits to graves in the Northern Territories.

(4) Response to the Situation in the Middle East

The Middle East is one of the major sources of energy supply for the international community, including

Japan, and 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.

On the other hand, the situation in the Middle East remains uncertain. Regarding the Gaza Strip, in January 2025, the agreement reached by the parties on the release of hostages and a ceasefire is an important step forward, improving the humanitarian situation and de-escalating tensions. The agreement should be implemented steadily and in good faith. The full implementation of the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Lebanon is also essential. In Syria, Japan strongly hopes for an inclusive political solution through dialogue among the Syrian people.

Japan will continue to make efforts as a responsible member of the international community, to de-escalate the situation as quickly as possible, improve the humanitarian situation, and establish a medium to long-term peace and stability in the region, in close coordination with the G7, the UN, and other relevant countries and organizations, as well as by leveraging its good relations with countries in the Middle East. Furthermore, Japan will proactively engage in diplomatic efforts in close cooperation with the countries concerned, while taking into consideration the issues of concern and needs of each country through various dialogue frameworks such as the “Japan-Arab Political Dialogue” and the “Japan-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)⁽⁵⁾ Foreign Ministers’ Meeting.”

(5) Regional Diplomacy Issues

While the Global South is enhancing its presence, in order to lead the international community toward cooperation, and to work together to create solutions to various challenges that face 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. Japan will also promote fine-tuned diplomacy through close dialogue,

utilizing Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Official Security Assistance (OSA). With regard to ODA, Japan will build new mechanisms, such as promoting the mobilization of private finance.

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 promote cooperation with Southeast Asia, a region of strategic importance as a marine transportation hub and a global growth center, through initiatives⁽⁶⁾ such as the outreach activities to Southeast Asia through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the expansion of collaborative projects in a wide range of fields, such as AI and digital, energy, and human resource development in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

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. Both Japan and India will further deepen cooperation in a wide 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 in a wide range of areas. Based on this foundation, Japan will further deepen its relations with the countries in Southwest Asia, which are important partners.

The Pacific Islands countries region is a critical region from the perspective of realizing FOIP. Based on the outcome of the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM10) held in July 2024, Japan will strongly

⁽⁵⁾ Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): Established in 1981 by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait. The objective of the GCC is to achieve coordination, integration, and interconnection among member states in a wide range of areas, including defense and economy.

⁽⁶⁾ The OECD is strengthening its relationship with ASEAN member states through outreach activities in Southeast Asia, including the “Southeast Asia Regional Programme (SEARP),” established by Japan’s initiative with the aim of promoting OECD standards in economic and social fields, such as investment, competition, taxation, and small- and medium-sized enterprises. In addition, the number of APEC projects proposed by Japan in collaboration with Southeast Asian countries has been increasing year by year, and the scope of these projects has been expanding to include a wide range of fields such as AI and digital, energy, and human resource development.

support the development of Pacific Island countries and their unity, respecting the needs of each country.

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. Japan will make efforts to co-create solutions to various issues with African countries, building on its past efforts and seizing the opportunity of the 9th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 9), to be held in Yokohama in August 2025.

Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) countries, many of which share values and principles with Japan, are important partners in countering the challenges to the current international order. Japan promotes cooperation with LAC countries through the “Diplomatic Initiative toward Latin America and the Caribbean,” under the policy of recognizing the diversity of LAC and tackling common challenges through dialogue. LAC is an important region for Japan's economic security, producing critical minerals and food resources, and the Nikkei (Japanese immigrants and their descendants) communities, numbering approximately 3.1 million in this region, are the foundation of the friendship and trust. In 2025, Japan will continue to accumulate new cooperation initiatives through such opportunities as diplomatic anniversaries with Brazil and Central American countries, as well as the 30th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP30) hosted by Brazil.

The countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus, while having close historical and economic ties with Russia, have been affected in various aspects 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) Promotion of Cultural and People-to-people Exchanges

For the peace and stability of the international community, promoting mutual understanding through exchanges — both between countries and among people — is crucial. Japan will further promote people-to-people exchanges with other countries and actively develop cultural diplomacy, while also focusing on fostering understanding of Japan in other countries.

(7) Economic Diplomacy

To contribute to the growth of Japan's economy and regional revitalization, Japan will support the overseas expansion of Japanese companies, increase exports of Japanese food products, and promote foreign direct investment in Japan. At diplomatic missions overseas, heads of missions lead efforts to assist Japanese companies, working with the officials in charge of cross-border economic affairs and Japanese business support, and will also promote direct investment in Japan.

Japan will promote initiatives to ensure the success of the 2025 World Exposition (Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan) and the International Horticultural Expo 2027, Yokohama, Japan (GREEN×EXPO 2027).

It is also important to work toward maintaining and expanding a rules-based, free, and fair economic order. Japan will make efforts to pursue the WTO reform to further strengthen the multilateral trading system, promote Economic Partnership Agreements, including the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), and establish international rules in emerging fields, such as promotion of the “Hiroshima AI Process”⁽⁷⁾ and Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT).

(8) Promotion of Multilateral Diplomacy

In 2025, as the UN marks its 80th anniversary, Japan will promote multilateral diplomacy with the UN at its core and work to strengthen UN functions, including reform of the UN Security Council, with the aim of leading the increasingly divided and confrontational international community toward reconciliation and cooperation.

⁽⁷⁾ Hiroshima AI Process: A process for discussing international rules about generative AI, launched at the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May 2023, under Japan's presidency. In the G7 leaders' statement of December 2023, the “Hiroshima AI Process Comprehensive Policy Framework” including “Hiroshima Process International Guiding Principles for All AI Actors” and “Hiroshima Process International Code of Conduct for Organizations Developing Advanced AI System” was endorsed.

Japan will continue to promote human rights diplomacy in its own way and diplomacy centered on the participation of women, as the 2025 co-chair of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Focal Points Network.

With regard to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, Japan will advance realistic and practical efforts toward a world without nuclear weapons, maintaining and strengthening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regime, the only universal framework in which both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States widely participate. In particular, 2025 marks the 80th year since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan, as the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during war, will further promote across generations and borders an accurate understanding of the realities of the atomic bombings, which is the starting point for all measures toward nuclear disarmament.

Regarding the safety of the discharge of ALPS treated water⁽⁸⁾ into the sea, Japan will maintain close coordination with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), provide detailed explanation both domestically and internationally, based on scientific evidence in a highly transparent manner, and gain understanding.

(9) Resolving Global Issues

On global issues such as climate change, global health, and disaster risk reduction, Japan will accelerate its efforts to achieve SDGs by the year 2030 based on the concept of human security. Japan will also lead the international rule-making efforts for global issues, looking toward the SDGs and beyond. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) will support activities of Japanese nationals who work in international organizations.

(10) Strengthening of the Comprehensive Foreign and Consular Policy Implementation Structure

In order to achieve these goals, MOFA will work toward strengthening its personnel structure, improving its financial basis, streamlining operations, promoting Digital Transformation (DX), and workstyle reforming, and fundamentally enhancing the diplomatic and consular implementation structure.

MOFA will also promote the strengthening of diplomatic missions overseas to ensure full preparedness for responding to crises, protecting Japanese nationals, and implementing information security measures.

⁽⁸⁾ 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 are far below the regulatory standards for safety, and then finally discharged into the sea.

Chapter 2

Japan's Foreign Policy by Region

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Section

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 ongoing and strengthening acts that shake the very foundations 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 Sixth 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 United States (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 Plan⁽¹⁾ 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,”

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



“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 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 Examples of 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, “Multilayered 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 airspace.

3 Collaboration and Cooperation with Other Countries

In 2024, Japan remained actively engaged in diplomatic activities for the realization of FOIP.

(1) United States (U.S.)

In April, Prime Minister Kishida made an official visit to the U.S. and held a Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting with President Joseph Biden in Washington, D.C.

In the United States-Japan Joint Leaders' Statement released as an outcome of the meeting, the leaders confirmed that both Japan and the U.S. pledge that both countries will continue their tireless work, together and with other partners, to realize a "free and open Indo-Pacific and world." In addition, in his address at a joint meeting of the U.S. Congress, Prime Minister Kishida also stated that Japan aims to realize FOIP together with like-minded countries.

At the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting held in Delaware, U.S. in September, Prime Minister Kishida emphasized that Japan and the U.S. further promote FOIP through their partnerships with like-minded countries, including the G7, Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad), Japan-U.S.-ROK, and Japan-U.S.-Philippines. Prime Minister Kishida also stressed the need to advance such cooperation with the Global South.

In addition, following their telephone call in October, Prime Minister Ishiba held an in-person meeting with President Biden in Lima, Peru in November, where the leaders confirmed that Japan and the U.S. will continue to closely cooperate. Furthermore, in February, Prime Minister Ishiba held a Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting with President Donald J. Trump in Washington, D.C., where both leaders concurred on closely cooperating toward the realization of FOIP.

Beyond the Japan-U.S. summit meetings, both countries have confirmed their intention to continue close cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region through various opportunities, including successive Japan-U.S. foreign ministers' meetings and the Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (Japan-U.S. "2+2") held in July.

(2) Australia and New Zealand

With regard to Australia, at the Eleventh Japan-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations ("2+2") held in September, both sides engaged in a candid exchange of views on the security environment in the Indo-Pacific region and concurred on deepening their shared strategic recognition. They also concurred on playing a leading role in realizing FOIP. In addition, during the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings in October, Prime Minister Ishiba held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and confirmed that under the "Special Strategic Partnership"

between Japan and Australia, both countries would work together toward the realization of FOIP.

With regard to New Zealand, during the visit to Japan by Prime Minister Christopher Luxon in June, a summit meeting was held in which both leaders concurred on further strengthening their cooperation toward the realization of FOIP amid the increasingly challenging strategic environment in the Indo-Pacific region.

(3) 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 2020, confirming that the AOIP and FOIP share fundamental principles. In addition, at the time of the announcement of the new plan for FOIP in 2023, Prime Minister Kishida emphasized that the AOIP and FOIP are visions that resonate with each other and announced a new contribution of 100 million U.S. dollars to the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund. Furthermore, at the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings in September of the same year, the Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Connectivity Initiative was announced to further strengthen connectivity in both tangible and intangible ways. At the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation in December of the same year, 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. At the ASEAN-Japan Summit in October, the leaders affirmed that cooperation is steadily progressing in line with the Joint Vision Statement. The ASEAN member states welcomed the steady progress and expressed appreciation for the complementary nature of FOIP and the AOIP as well as expectations for further cooperation. Moreover, at the East Asia Summit (EAS) held in the same month, Prime Minister Ishiba stated that Japan consistently advocates the AOIP and will actively support its promotion and mainstreaming. He also expressed Japan's determination to enhance cooperation through ASEAN-led frameworks to maintain and strengthen the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

(4) Canada

Japan and Canada confirmed that they would continue to cooperate toward the realization of FOIP through the steady implementation of the Japan-Canada Action Plan for Contributing to a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, which was announced by both countries in 2022, at the Japan-Canada Summit Meetings held in June, September, and November; the visit to Montreal by Foreign Minister Kamikawa in January; the visit to Japan by Minister of Foreign Affairs Mélanie Joly in July; and the Japan-Canada Foreign Ministers' Meeting held during the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in November.

Cooperation under the Action Plan steadily progressed in areas such as security and the rule of law, including the Japan-Canada bilateral exercise (KADEX24) and cooperation in monitoring illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

(5) India

At the Third Japan-India 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting held in New Delhi in August, Japan and India emphasized their shared strategic goals for achieving FOIP. In addition, at the 17th Japan-India Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue held in the same month, Foreign Minister Kamikawa stated that Japan and India have a great responsibility for the peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region, and Japan would like to deepen bilateral cooperation to fulfill this responsibility in cooperation with India. Furthermore, the two countries confirmed their cooperation during the Japan-India Summit Meeting in October and the Japan-India Foreign Ministers' Meeting in November.

(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 Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Japan in July,

the foreign ministers of the four countries reaffirmed their steadfast commitment to the realization of FOIP. Furthermore, at the Quad Leaders' Meeting held in the U.S. in September, the leaders reaffirmed the increasing importance of continuing to demonstrate their strong commitment toward the common vision of FOIP to the international community, and issued the Wilmington Declaration. In January 2025, a Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held the day after the inauguration of the new U.S. administration, and a joint statement was released reaffirming the shared commitment to strengthening FOIP.

(7) Republic of Korea

At the Japan-ROK Summit Meeting in May and the Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July, Japan and the ROK confirmed the importance of maintaining and strengthening FOIP, and that Japan-ROK cooperation is increasingly important in effectively addressing global challenges.

(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 other such meetings. Amidst this, trilateral cooperation has also been advancing toward the realization of FOIP. In addition, in the year following the Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit held at Camp David in the U.S. in August 2023, the three countries have confirmed on successive occasions that their trilateral cooperation has progressed globally across a wide range of fields. At the Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting in September, the three countries concurred on cooperating even more closely amid increasing challenges to the free and open international order based on the rule of law. In addition, in June and November, the Japan-U.S.-ROK joint exercise Freedom Edge was conducted across multiple domains. Japan, the U.S., and the ROK continued to demonstrate their defense posture and strong will to protect freedom by enhancing their trilateral interoperability across multiple domains for the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific, including the Korean Peninsula.

Furthermore, in November, a Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting was held in Lima, Peru, where the leaders confirmed that strategic collaboration among Japan, the U.S. and the ROK has become more important than ever and that trilateral cooperation has been expanding globally across a wide range of fields. On this basis, the three leaders concurred on establishing the Trilateral Coordinating Secretariat and continuing to work closely together, including through this Secretariat, in various fields such as responses to North Korea.

(9) Europe

A The EU

In February, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUGE Yoshifumi attended the 3rd EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum held in Belgium. At the meeting, he shared with participating countries the necessity for European and Indo-Pacific nations to work together on various fields and issues where ties are deepening between Europe and the Indo-Pacific, including addressing the increasingly inseparable security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions.

In November, Foreign Minister Iwaya held the 1st Japan-EU Foreign Ministerial Strategic Dialogue with High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice-President of the European Commission Josep Borrell Fontelles. Both sides reaffirmed that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions is inseparable and confirmed that Japan and the EU will closely coordinate with each other in maintaining and strengthening the free and open international order.

B The United Kingdom (UK)

In August, the UK announced that the Protocol for its accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) would enter into force by December 15. At the Japan-UK Summit Meeting held in November, Prime Minister Ishiba and Prime Minister Keir Starmer shared the recognition that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable. The leaders also welcomed the great progress in meaningful and concrete cooperation between the two countries toward realizing FOIP, including the Global Combat

Air Programme (GCAP), the deployment of the UK's Carrier Strike Group to the Indo-Pacific planned for 2025, and the application of Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF) asset protection measures to the UK. The two leaders concurred to strongly promote such cooperation. At the same meeting, the leaders announced the launch of the Japan-UK Economic 2+2 Ministers' Meeting ("Economic 2+2"). Furthermore, at the Japan-Italy-UK Leaders' Meeting on GCAP held in the same month, the three leaders concurred on continuing close trilateral cooperation toward completing the GCAP's development.

C France

In May, Prime Minister Kishida held a summit working lunch with President Emmanuel Macron. The leaders shared the view to begin negotiations on the Japan-France Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), a framework to enhance interoperability between Japan's SDF and the French Armed Forces and to further advance bilateral security and defense cooperation. The leaders also welcomed the signing of the "Japan-France Declaration on Cooperation in The Field of Critical Minerals" and concurred on strengthening cooperation in the field of economic security. Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone call with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Noël Barrot in October, as well as an in-person foreign ministers' meeting in Italy in November. At these meetings, the two foreign ministers concurred on advancing cooperation in the fields of security and economy and science and technology under the Roadmap on Japan-France Cooperation. The foreign ministers also welcomed the establishment of the Japan-France Counter-Terrorism Consultations to promote cooperation in the counter-terrorism field. The ministers also shared the recognition that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable and confirmed that Japan and France will closely cooperate on security conditions in the Indo-Pacific as well as on the situations in Ukraine and the Middle East.

D Germany

Based on Germany's Indo-Pacific guidelines approved by the Cabinet in September 2020, the Government of Germany has been working to strengthen its engagement with the region, and security cooperation

between Japan and Germany has further deepened. In January, the two countries signed the Japan-Germany Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), which establishes the settlement procedures for the reciprocal provision of supplies such as fuel and services during joint activities between the Self-Defense Forces of Japan and the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Germany. The ACSA entered into force in July. In the same month, Prime Minister Kishida visited Germany and held a Japan-Germany Summit Meeting. The two leaders welcomed the recent progress in security and defense cooperation between the two countries as Germany has been strengthening its involvement in the Indo-Pacific region. Subsequently, under the framework of the Government of Germany's “Indo-Pacific Deployment 2024,” the German Air Force, including Eurofighter combat aircraft, visited Japan in July. In addition, in August, the frigate *Baden-Württemberg* and the supply ship *Frankfurt am Main* made port calls in Japan. On both occasions, joint training exercises were conducted with the SDF.

E Italy

In February, Prime Minister Kishida held a Japan-Italy Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. The two leaders confirmed cooperation in the field of defense and security, including the GCAP, and concurred on continuing to work closely together for the smooth progress of the joint development of the next-generation fighter aircraft by Japan, the UK, and Italy under the GCAP. At the G7 Apulia Summit in June, Prime Minister Kishida also held informal talks with Prime Minister Meloni, and the two leaders announced the commencement of negotiations on the Japan-Italy Acquisition and Cross-Servicing

Agreement (Japan-Italy ACSA). In August, a carrier strike group composed of the aircraft carrier *Cavour*, the frigate *Alpino*, and the patrol ship *Raimondo Montecuccoli*, as well as air force aircraft, visited Japan and conducted joint training exercises with the SDF. In addition, from late August to early September, the *Raimondo Montecuccoli* conducted its first-ever monitoring and surveillance activities against illicit maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers⁽²⁾ by North Korean-flagged vessels. In November, the Japan-Italy ACSA was signed. Furthermore, at the Japan-Italy-UK Leaders' Meeting on GCAP held in the same month, the leaders of the three countries concurred on continuing to work closely together to complete the GCAP's development.

F The Netherlands

In January, Foreign Minister Kamikawa, through a Japan-Netherlands Foreign Ministers' Meeting in a working lunch format with Minister of Foreign Affairs Hanke Bruins Slot and a courtesy call on Prime Minister Mark Rutte, shared the recognition that the security of Europe and Indo-Pacific are inseparable, and concurred on strengthening bilateral relations, including in the fields of security and defense. From late May to early June, the frigate *HNLMS Tromp* conducted its first-ever monitoring and surveillance activities against illicit maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers with North Korean-flagged vessels. In June, the *HNLMS Tromp* made a port call in Nagasaki. In July, Prime Minister Kishida held a Japan-Netherlands Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Dick Schoof and welcomed the Netherlands' concrete engagement in the Indo-Pacific region, including the dispatch of the *HNLMS Tromp* to Japan in June.

⁽²⁾ 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.

Section 2

Asia and Oceania

1 Overview

(General Overview)

The Asia-Oceania is a dynamic region where countries and regions at various stages of development exist, and 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 8.1 billion, approximately 3.8 billion live in East Asia Summit (EAS) participating countries⁽¹⁾ excluding the United States (U.S.) and Russia. This represents about 46% of the world's population.⁽²⁾ Their combined nominal gross domestic product (GDP) is 33.0 trillion U.S. dollars (2023), and accounts for more than 30% of the world total.⁽³⁾ Strong growth of the region with high potential, and close economic relations with the region, will also bring affluence and vitality to Japan.

On the other hand, the security environment in this 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, climate change, unstable demand and supply of food and resources, frequent natural disasters, terrorism, and aging populations coupled with declining birthrates.

Within this context, Japan has been actively engaging in diplomacy in this region, including at the leader and foreign ministerial levels, and is maintaining and developing good relations with neighboring countries. In April, Prime Minister Kishida attended the first Japan-U.S.-Philippines Summit in Washington, D.C. during his official visit to the U.S. as a State Guest. The leaders of the three countries emphasized their unwavering commitment to freedom of navigation and overflight, and concurred on strengthening cooperation, including responding to economic coercion and enhancing supply chain resilience.

In May, Prime Minister Kishida attended the Japan-China-Republic of Korea (ROK) Trilateral Summit, held in the ROK for the first time in about four and a half years, where the three leaders welcomed the revitalization of the trilateral process and concurred on promoting future-oriented practical cooperation. During his attendance at the NATO Summit held in Washington, D.C., in July, he held the Japan-Australia-New Zealand-ROK (IP4) Leaders' Meeting, held informal talks among the IP4 leaders and President Biden, and held the IP4+Ukraine Leader's Meeting. Also in July, Prime Minister Kishida hosted the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM10) in Tokyo, co-chaired by Prime Minister Mark Brown of the Cook Islands. Japan and the Pacific Island countries and regions reaffirmed their relationships to "stride forward together" toward the future while tackling common challenges, and adopted the Leaders' Declaration and Joint Action Plan as outcomes of the discussions.

⁽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

In September, Prime Minister Kishida visited the ROK and held the Japan-ROK Summit Meeting, with President Yoon Suk Yeol, which marked the 12th meeting between them. Later in the same month, he attended the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Leaders' Meeting in the U.S., where the four countries shared the intention to continue demonstrating their strong commitment to the common vision of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" to the international community. Moreover, in Delaware, Prime Minister Kishida held Summit Meetings with Australia and India, and also held Summit Meetings with Palau and Mongolia in New York.

In October, Prime Minister Ishiba visited Laos to attend the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings as his first overseas visit after assuming office as Prime Minister. Prime Minister Ishiba conveyed his strong determination to further strengthen the half-century-long relationship of trust between Japan and ASEAN. He also held summit meetings and informal talks with the leaders of the ROK, China, India, the Philippines, Laos, Viet Nam, Australia, and Thailand.

In November, in order to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' Meeting, Prime Minister Ishiba visited Peru, and held summit meetings and informal talks with the leaders of Malaysia, the U.S., China, Viet Nam, Indonesia, the ROK, and Peru. He also participated in the Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting, and the leaders concurred to establish the Trilateral Coordinating Secretariat and to continue working closely together, including through this Secretariat, in various fields such as policies toward North Korea.

In February, as well as visiting Samoa, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Fiji and attended the 5th Ministerial Interim Meeting of the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM), where she held bilateral meetings with ten countries. Later in the same month, during her visit in Brazil to participate in the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, she held a Japan-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting. She also attended the Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and the foreign ministers concurred to accelerate the momentum of the Japan-U.S.-ROK cooperation and reaffirmed that they would continue to work closely towards the complete denuclearization of North Korea.

In May, while attending the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Ministerial Council Meeting (MCM), Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a Japan-Laos Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Laos Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Saleumxay. She visited Sri Lanka and Nepal also in May, and visited Cambodia and the Philippines in July, paying courtesy calls on the leaders and holding foreign ministers' meetings in each country. In the Philippines, a Japan-Philippines Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting ("2+2") was held, and the Japan-Philippines Reciprocal Access Agreement was signed. In July, she attended the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Laos, where she explained that broad cooperation is steadily progressing in line with the three pillars of the Joint Vision Statement. On this opportunity, she also held the Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting and held foreign ministers' meetings with Laos, China, the ROK, Indonesia, Singapore, and Timor-Leste. Later in July, she held the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Tokyo, where the four ministers emphasized the importance of adherence to international law for the rules-based maritime order and reaffirmed their strong opposition to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion. In August she visited India, participated in the Japan-India 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting, paid a courtesy call on the Prime Minister, and participated in a Japan-India Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue.

In September, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Australia to attend the Japan-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations ("2+2"), and held a Japan-Australia Foreign Ministers' Working Dinner. In the same month, in order to attend the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, she visited New York, U.S., and on that occasion, she held a Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting as well as a Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting, where the three ministers concurred on further strengthening trilateral cooperation as the free and open international order based on the rule of law is facing serious challenges.

In November, Foreign Minister Iwaya, during his visit in Peru to attend the APEC Ministerial Meeting, he held a Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting, a

Japan-Peru Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and a Japan-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting, in addition to informal talks with the foreign ministers of Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Viet Nam, New Zealand, and Canada. In December, he visited China, and held a Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the Second Japan-China High-Level People-to-People and Cultural Exchange Dialogue.

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

The Japan-U.S. Alliance is the cornerstone of Japan's diplomacy and security, and the foundation for peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region and the international community. 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 23 Summit Meetings and 36 Foreign Ministers' Meetings, including telephone calls (as of December 2024). 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 in China, North Korea, Russia and Ukraine, and the Middle East.

In April, Prime Minister Kishida, as the first Japanese prime minister in nine years to make an official visit to the U.S. with State Dinner, held a Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting with President Biden. Prime Minister Kishida remarked that the two countries are bonded by deep trust and multilayered friendship, and that based on these unprecedentedly strong bonds of friendship and trust, Japan and the U.S. have become global partners beyond bilateral or regional spheres, to uphold and bolster the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

The two leaders exchanged views on regional issues and reaffirmed that unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion are totally unacceptable anywhere in the world, and that they will resolutely

respond to them in coordination with allies and like-minded countries. In the joint statement released as the outcome of their meeting, it was confirmed that Japan and the U.S. pledge to continue their tireless work, together and with other partners, to realize a Free and Open Indo-Pacific and world. In his address to the joint session of the U.S. Congress, Prime Minister Kishida also stated his intention to work with like-minded countries to achieve a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific."

In July, Secretary of State Blinken and Secretary of Defense Austin visited Japan for the Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (Japan-U.S. "2+2"). The Japanese side conveyed that the foundations of a free and open international order based on the rule of law continue to be shaken, that this is a critical juncture where the decisions both countries make today will determine the future, and that both countries must continuously strengthen the Alliance and increase its deterrence in order to protect and defend the existing international order. The U.S. side celebrated the extraordinary progress in enhancing the alliance's roles, missions, and capabilities, which support the ability to uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

Under the Ishiba administration, which took office in October, strengthening the Japan-U.S. Alliance remains the top priority of its diplomatic and security policy. In November, Prime Minister Ishiba met with President Biden in Peru for a Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting, where they concurred on continuing cooperation to strengthen the Japan-U.S. Alliance, and to further develop networks of like-minded countries, including Japan-U.S.-ROK, as well as continuing to work closely together on issues regarding North Korea, including the nuclear and missile issues as well as the abductions issue. Foreign Minister Iwama also held a Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Secretary Blinken, where they exchanged views on regional situations such as issues related to China, policies toward North Korea including on the nuclear and missile issues and the abductions issue, and the situation in Ukraine. The two Ministers also concurred on implementing cooperation to further strengthen Japan-U.S. Alliance deterrence and response capabilities, and to further develop networks of like-minded countries.

In December, Secretary of Defense Austin visited Japan and paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister

Ishiba. They exchanged views on Japan-U.S. security and defense cooperation for strengthening the deterrence and response capabilities of the Alliance, bearing in mind the increasingly severe regional security environment, and also concurred on continuing efforts for upgrading the command and control of the Alliance, promoting defense equipment and technology cooperation, and strengthening the network of like-minded countries.

(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 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⁽⁴⁾ 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, the examination of the 2024 Ninth Periodic Report submitted in October 2024, and the examination of the Seventh Report of Japan under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in October 2022.

There have been installations of comfort woman statues⁽⁵⁾ 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 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(MOFA) 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 second session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) was held. Premier Li Qiang delivered the Report on the Work of the Government and, in reviewing the previous year, stated that China had weathered external pressures, overcome domestic difficulties, successfully accomplished the main goals and tasks for the year, maintained social stability, and steadily advanced the comprehensive construction of a modern socialist country in all respects in the new era. With respect to policy direction for 2024, Premier Li noted that strategic opportunities continue to coexist with risks and challenges and that favorable conditions outweigh unfavorable factors. He stated that the GDP growth target for 2024 was set at roughly the same level as last year's initial goal, around five percent, but cautioned that meeting this year's goal will not be easy.

It was also announced that the post-session press conference by the Premier of the State Council for both domestic and foreign journalists, a post-session practice that had continued for about thirty years, would not take place this time or for several years going forward.

The Third Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee (Third Plenary Session) was held in July, and it adopted the “Resolution on Further Deepening Reform Comprehensively to Advance Chinese Modernization” (Resolution). The Resolution states that, faced with a complex and intertwined international and domestic situation, a new scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation, and the people's new expectations, advancing Chinese modernization requires further deepening of reform as a whole, and announces that the reform tasks set out in the Resolution will be completed by the 80th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 2029. “Deepening reform comprehensively”

⁽⁴⁾ For details, refer to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page24e_000163.html

⁽⁵⁾ 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.

⁽⁴⁾



was first proposed at the Third Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee in 2013, and this Resolution, in addition to those earlier reform items, also adds provisions on the objectives “to modernize China’s system and capacity for governance” and to “foster favourable external environment.” Additionally, in terms of personnel matters, the resignation of former Foreign Minister Qin Gang was accepted, and he was dismissed from his position as a Central Committee member.

Unlike the previous ones, Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee Political Bureau meeting in September focused on the economy. The Central Economic Work Conference was held in December as usual.

The year 2024 marked the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China, and on September 30 a commemorative reception was held at the Great Hall of the People. In his keynote address, President Xi Jinping expressed gratitude to the leaders, martyrs, and heroes who contributed to the nation’s founding and development, and emphasized the building of a strong country through Chinese modernization. He also warned that “the road ahead cannot be smooth; there will inevitably be difficulties and challenges such as strong winds, high waves, and even raging storms that await us,” indicating his recognition of the severe tests to come.

2024 also marked the 25th anniversary of Macao’s return, and President Xi visited Macao to attend the 25th anniversary of Macao’s return to the motherland and the inaugural ceremony of the sixth-term government of the Macao Special Administrative Region.

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 been directly communicating its position to the Government of China, for example by also taking summit meetings and foreign ministers’ meetings as opportunities to express serious concern about these situations. In the communiqués from the G7 Apulia Summit in June and the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in April, the

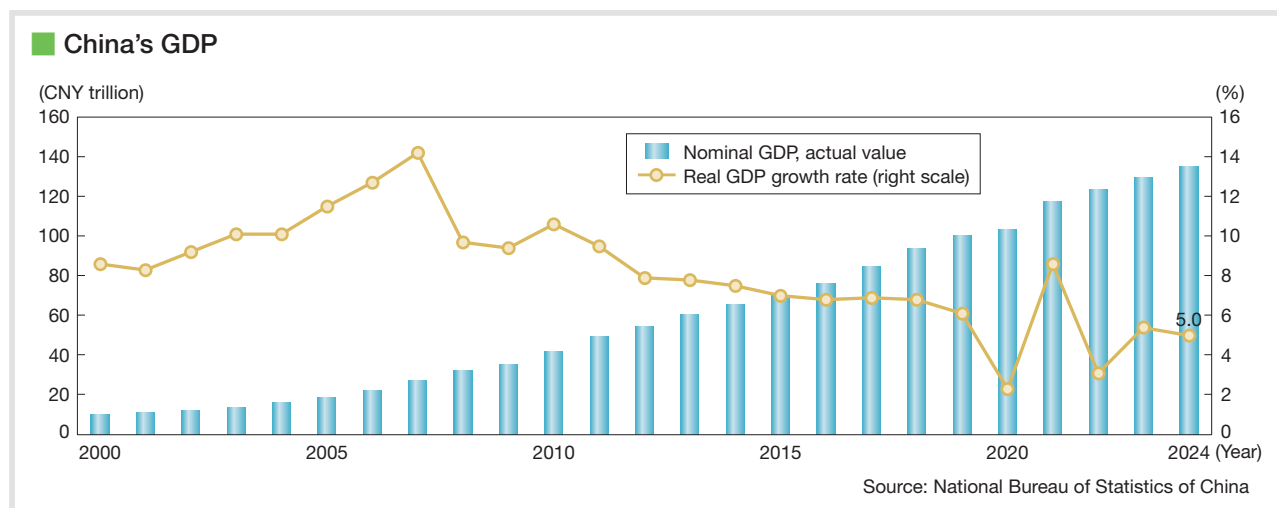
G7 concurred to continue expressing concern about human rights situation in China. Furthermore, at the UN, Japan has been the only member state from Asia to participate in a joint statement by like-minded countries expressing concerns about the human rights situation in China. In October, at the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly, Australia delivered a joint statement on behalf of fifteen countries regarding human rights violations in the XUAR and the Tibet Autonomous Region, and Japan joined that 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 conservative growth rate target of around 5% was set for 2024, which was the same as the previous year. The deficit-to-GDP ratio was also maintained at 3.0%, and the upper limit for new local government special bonds was modestly raised to 3.90 trillion CNY (up from 3.80 trillion CNY the previous year). Premier Li Qiang also explicitly stated that “achieving this year’s targets will not be easy.” As a result, China’s full-year real GDP growth rate for 2024 increased by 5.0% year-on-year, achieving the target, and by quarter, the first quarter (January to March) increased by 5.3% year-on-year, the second quarter (April to June) increased by 4.7% year-on-year, the third quarter (July to September) increased by 4.6% year-on-year, and the fourth quarter (October to December) increased by 5.4% year-on-year.

China’s economy has remained stalled due to a sluggish real estate market and deteriorating consumer sentiment. Although the youth unemployment rate, which had climbed in 2023, was again published in 2024 (excluding students), it stood at 18.8% in August 2024, remaining at a persistently high level. Meanwhile, imports and exports trended higher than in 2023, driven by a rebound from the previous year’s weak performance and a precautionary last-minute demand due to concerns about various countries’ policies toward China regarding semiconductors and electric vehicles (EVs).

In July, the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee was convened under the theme of “Chinese modernization,” and highlighted five



key priorities: (1) the Party's role as the driving force in economic-system reform; (2) institutional mechanisms that support all-around innovation; (3) comprehensively deepening reform; (4) unified planning for development and security; and (5) strengthening the Party's leadership over reform. Real estate, the cause of China's economic slowdown, is now considered to be a livelihood issue rather than an economic issue, with greater emphasis placed on medium- to long-term development centered on science and technology. In the latter half of July, in order to stimulate sluggish domestic consumption, the government announced an expansion of subsidy programs of approximately 300 billion CNY, to encourage the replacement of passenger cars and home appliances. At the meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC held at the end of July, President Xi Jinping reiterated that the economy went through bipolarization and designated stand-alone priorities: expanding domestic demand through consumption promotion and comprehensively revitalizing rural areas. As noted earlier, unlike the previous ones, the meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC in September focused on economic conditions. It assessed that "the fundamentals of the Chinese economy, and favorable conditions such as a vast market, strong economic resilience and great potential remain unchanged, but also new challenges have emerged in economic management." The meeting then set forth measures such as responding to economic fluctuations via fiscal and monetary policies, ensuring necessary fiscal outlays, supporting businesses facing difficulties, and ensuring the bottom line of people's livelihoods by providing assistance for jobseekers and low-income

individuals, and pledged to strive toward meeting the annual targets. From late September to the end of October, relevant ministries held press briefings to unveil specific policies, including in finance (cuts to mortgage interest rates), fiscal policy (strengthened aid for the poor and for students via increased scholarships), and real estate (expanded lending for projects listed on the so-called "whitelist"). In October, the Standing Committee of the NPC approved raising the local government debt limit by 6 trillion CNY to replace hidden debts. Moreover, by allocating 800 billion CNY from newly issued local government special bonds over five consecutive years starting in 2024, local fiscal resources for debt resolution will increase by 10 trillion CNY, thereby enabling the reduction of total hidden local government debt from 4.3 trillion CNY to 2.3 trillion CNY by 2028.

At the Central Economic Work Conference held in December, it was recognized that, despite facing a complex and severe situation marked by increasing external pressures and internal difficulties in 2024, economic management remained generally stable, and the principal goals and tasks of economic and social development were smoothly and successfully achieved. On the other hand, it was also acknowledged that the adverse effects of shifting external conditions are deepening, that the production and operations of some enterprises have become difficult primarily due to insufficient domestic demand, that employment and income growth for the populace are under pressure, and that numerous risks remain.

(C) Foreign Policy

At the Foreign Minister's press conference during the NPC sessions on March, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, stated, "China will strive for stability in major-country relations, common progress with its neighboring countries, and rejuvenation with fellow countries in the Global South." In 2024, diplomatic activities at various levels, including high-level engagements led by President Xi Jinping, have remained active.

In relations with Russia, direct communication between the leaders of China and Russia remained frequent in 2024, and during President Vladimir Putin's first foreign visit of his overall fifth term, to China in May, the two leaders released a Joint Statement of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on Deepening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination for the New Era in the Context of the 75th Anniversary of China-Russia Diplomatic Relations, which affirmed that the partnership's development aligns with the fundamental interests of both countries.

In relations with neighboring countries, China's exchanges with ASEAN member states have been more frequent than with other regions, and the President of Indonesia and the President of Viet Nam, who both took office in 2024, chose China as their first foreign destination.

As for relations with Global South countries, the Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was held in Beijing in September. At the Summit, President Xi Jinping announced that China would upgrade its bilateral relations with all African countries with which it has diplomatic relations to a "Strategic partnership," that it would upgrade its relations with Africa as a whole to an "all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era," and proposed cooperation in a wide range of fields, including security, cultural and people-to-people exchanges, green development, and food aid. In addition, the "Beijing Declaration" adopted at the meeting, included numerous Chinese positions, including

the "community with a shared future for mankind, Belt and Road cooperation, the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI) and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI)," as well as support for China's positions on Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and Tibet, and measures to deter "decoupling" and unilateralism.

At the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Heads of State Council Meeting held in Astana, Kazakhstan, in July, Belarus's accession was approved. At the BRICS⁽⁶⁾ Summit held in Russia in October, the outcome document created a new category of "BRICS Partner Countries," reflecting China's emphasis on expanding multilateral platforms. Moreover, at the G20 Rio de Janeiro Summit in Brazil in November, President Xi Jinping reiterated his commitment to walking together with Global South countries.

With respect to U.S.-China relations, particularly since the U.S.-China Summit meeting at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting in San Francisco in November 2023, communication has taken place at various levels, including high-level exchanges, among defense authorities and in areas such as illicit drug control, artificial intelligence (AI), and climate change. A U.S.-China summit meeting was also held at the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Peru in November. President Xi Jinping noted that, over the past four years, U.S.-China relations have undergone turbulence yet have also engaged in dialogue and cooperation, thereby achieving overall stability, and he underscored that the Taiwan question, democracy and human rights, China's path and system, and China's development right are four red lines for China.

Meanwhile, economic confrontation between the U.S. and China, including economic security, has expanded since the previous year. In 2023 China added gallium, germanium, and graphite to the list of items subject to export control measures, and in September 2024, the list was further expanded to include anti-mony and items related to superhard materials. Also in September 2024, the U.S. decided to significantly

(6) BRICS: A term referring to Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. At the summit meeting in August 2023, invitations for new membership were announced for Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). (Argentina subsequently withdrew its application for membership due to a change of administration, and there are also reports that Saudi Arabia has not yet joined.) At the summit meeting in October 2024, the leaders concurred on creating a new category of BRICS Partner Countries, and 2024 chair country Russia announced that nine countries — Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Thailand, Uganda, and Uzbekistan — will join as Partner Countries from January 2025. In January 2025, Brazil, 2025 chair country, announced Indonesia's full membership.

raise tariffs against China under Section 301 of the Trade Act. These tariffs applied to some Chinese products, such as EVs and semiconductors (worth a total of 18 billion U.S. dollars). President Biden stated that the tariffs protect American workers from China's unfair trade policies and practices. In response, China expressed "strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition." In October, the U.S. announced that an Executive Order prohibiting Americans from investing in China's semiconductor and microelectronics, quantum information technology, and AI sectors in case such investments pose a particularly acute national security threat, would take effect in January 2025. Also in October, China implemented its Regulations on the Administration of Rare Earths. In December, the U.S. announced enhancement of its export-controls on semiconductors and semiconductor-manufacturing equipment bound for China. Later in December, Ministry of Commerce of China announced measures to tighten controls over the export on shipments to the U.S. of dual-use items related to gallium, germanium, antimony, and superhard materials. Stable U.S.-China relations are important not only for Japan, but also for the entire international community. Japan will continue to closely monitor future developments.

(D) 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." The defense budget published by China does not sufficiently disclose its breakdown or the intentions behind its increases, and is believed to represent only a portion of actual military expenditures. 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 intelligentization."

In 2024, in August, a Chinese military aircraft intruded into Japan's territorial airspace, and in September, the aircraft carrier of the Chinese Navy *Liaoning* navigated waters close to the territorial sea between Yonaguni Island and Iriomote Island, both of which were the first incidents of their kind. Joint navigations by Chinese and Russian naval vessels and joint flights by Chinese and Russian bombers in the vicinity of Japan were confirmed, continuing on from the previous years. Moreover, following Taiwan's presidential inauguration ceremony in May and the "Double Ten Day" celebrations in October, China conducted military exercises in the maritime and air domains surrounding Taiwan. At the Japan-China Summit Meetings held in May, October, and November, Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Ishiba stated that Japan is closely monitoring relevant developments including military activities and reiterated that peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is extremely important for the international community, including Japan. In the South China Sea, China has been continuing and intensifying 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 actions to increase regional tensions, such as further militarization of disputed features and the dangerous and coercive use of coast guard and maritime militia vessels and aircraft against coastal States and others.

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 2024, 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 May 26, while visiting Seoul, ROK to attend the Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit, Prime Minister Kishida held a summit meeting with Premier Li Qiang of the State Council. Prime Minister Kishida stated that he hopes to continue dialogue at various levels and make progress on various challenges as well as issues of concern between Japan and China while materializing various possibilities that exist in Japan-China relations, in line with the broad direction of comprehensively promoting a "Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests" and building "constructive and stable Japan-China relations," which was reaffirmed by Prime Minister Kishida and President Xi Jinping in November 2023, and Premier Li Qiang expressed similar views.

On July 26, while visiting Laos to attend the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Foreign Minister Kamikawa welcomed the communication and exchange of views between the two countries, including the recent convening of the Japan-China Strategic Dialogue, under a broad direction of comprehensively promoting a "Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests" and building "constructive and stable Japan-China relations," and Foreign Minister Wang expressed similar views. The two Foreign Ministers concurred on making persistent efforts to rhythmically build multilayered communication, including mutual visits by the Foreign Ministers, which both sides have extended invitations for.

On September 23, while visiting New York to attend the UN General Assembly, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Foreign Minister Wang Yi. In relation to the incident in which a Japanese school student was attacked and later passed away in Shenzhen, Foreign Minister Kamikawa urged the Chinese side to clarify the truth. In addition, Minister Kamikawa strongly urged the Chinese side to take concrete measures to ensure the safety of Japanese nationals residing in China and to take actions against anti-Japanese social media posts. In response, Foreign Minister Wang expressed that China's position has been as stated by the Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, and that what has happened is an isolated and individual case that China would not like to see happen, and that it will be dealt with in accordance with the Chinese law. Regarding the discharge of ALPS treated water⁽⁷⁾ into the sea and China's import restrictions on Japanese aquatic products, Minister Kamikawa reiterated Japan's consistent approach based on scientific evidence. Further, based on the shared recognition between Japan and China that was announced on September 20, Foreign Minister Kamikawa also stated Japan's intention to carry out the additional monitoring as soon as possible and ensure tangible progress toward the elimination of the restrictions.

On October 10, Prime Minister Ishiba, while visiting Laos to attend the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings, held a summit meeting with Premier Li Qiang. The two leaders confirmed that Japan and China continue to share a broad direction of comprehensively promoting a "Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests" and building "constructive and stable Japan-China relations." The two leaders also confirmed to maintain multilayered communications between Japan and China at all levels, including at the summit level, with a view to realizing concrete outcomes. In this context, Prime Minister Ishiba emphasized that while there is potential for cooperation as well as issues and concerns between the two countries, he hopes to work together to ensure that the people of both countries could benefit from the development of the relationship through the efforts

of both governments. The two leaders both expressed their appreciation for the announcements made by their respective governments regarding the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea and China's import restrictions on Japanese aquatic products. In this vein, Prime Minister Ishiba called for the early restoration of imports of Japanese aquatic products.

On November 15, Prime Minister Ishiba, while visiting Peru to attend APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, held a Japan-China Summit Meeting with President Xi Jinping. The two leaders confirmed that Japan and China continue to share a broad direction of comprehensively promoting a "Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests" and building "constructive and stable Japan-China relations." In addition, the two leaders affirmed to firmly uphold the principles and common recognition of the four basic documents between Japan and China and to build a relationship in which they could continue candid dialogue. Furthermore, under this broad direction, the two leaders confirmed to make joint efforts to further strengthen communication at all levels, including at the summit level, in a wide range of fields, and to reduce issues and concerns and increase cooperation and coordination. Prime Minister Ishiba emphasized that he seeks to build up concrete results through efforts by both sides so that the people of both countries could appreciate the positive development in Japan-China relations.

Additionally, the two leaders confirmed that they would make arrangements to realize mutual visits by their respective foreign ministers, including holding the Japan-China High-Level People-to-People and Cultural Exchange Dialogue and Japan-China High-Level Economic Dialogue at an appropriate time, in view of expanding cooperation and resolving issues of concern. The two leaders reaffirmed that both sides would steadily implement the announcements regarding the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea and China's import restrictions on Japanese aquatic products. In this vein, Prime Minister Ishiba called for the early restoration of imports of Japanese aquatic products. Prime Minister Ishiba called on the Chinese

(7) 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.



Japan-China Summit Meeting (November 15, Peru; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

side to promptly resume discussions on the resumption of Japanese beef exports and the expansion of exports of Japanese rice, and the two leaders confirmed that both sides would maintain communications. The two leaders also concurred on making efforts to make progress on concrete cooperation in fields such as green economy, including environment and energy conservation, as well as medical care, nursing care and healthcare. They also concurred to work together on global issues. Prime Minister Ishiba expressed Japan's serious concerns about the situation in the East China Sea, including the situation surrounding the Senkaku Islands, and the intensification of Chinese military activities, and called on the Chinese side to address them. Regarding incidents resulting in deaths and injuries, including of students at Japanese schools in Suzhou and Shenzhen, Prime Minister Ishiba also requested that the Government of China strengthen safety measures for Japanese nationals residing in China. In response, President Xi stated that China, a country ruled by law, will handle cases in accordance with the law, and that China will ensure to protect the safety of foreign nationals residing in China, including Japanese citizens. Prime Minister Ishiba stated that Japan is closely monitoring relevant developments including military activities and reiterated that peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is extremely important for the international community, including Japan. Prime Minister Ishiba expressed Japan's serious concerns about the situations in the South China Sea, Hong Kong, XUAR and others. In addition, Prime Minister Ishiba called for the early release of the detained Japanese nationals. The two leaders also exchanged views on the situation regarding North Korea, including the abductions issue.

On December 25, Foreign Minister Iwaya visited China, where he held talks with Foreign Minister Wang Yi and paid a courtesy call on Premier Li Qiang. Furthermore, Foreign Minister Iwaya and Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology ABE Toshiko held the Second Japan-China High-Level People-to-People and Cultural Exchange Dialogue with Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Minister of Culture and Tourism Sun Yue-li.

During the Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting, the two foreign ministers, under a broad direction of comprehensively promoting a "Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests" and building "constructive and stable Japan-China relations" as confirmed by the leaders of both Japan and China, concurred that they would make joint efforts to reduce issues and concerns and increase cooperation and coordination. In addition, to this end, the two ministers confirmed that they would further strengthen communication at various levels and in a wide range of fields, accelerate necessary consultations and work, and make utmost efforts to realize concrete results by utilizing opportunities including high-level communication and interaction, including between the leaders and foreign ministers.

At the courtesy call on Premier Li Qiang, both sides concurred that they would expand cooperation in the area of people-to-people exchange and economic field, and on the importance of promoting mutual understanding between both countries and their people through the promotion of exchange and dialogue at various levels and by making efforts to improve public sentiment toward each other's country, and also concurred that both Japan and China would work together to fulfill their responsibilities as major powers which have responsibility in the region and the world.

During the Second Japan-China High-Level People-to-People and Cultural Exchange Dialogue, both sides confirmed that the Governments of Japan and China would support exchanges between the two countries in order to revitalize two-way people-to-people and cultural exchanges between Japan and China. Furthermore, both sides concurred to work together to enhance opportunities for youth exchanges and exchanges between experts, as well as to improve the quality of these programs; additionally, both sides

concurred to deepen exchanges with the view of contributing to the regional revitalization of both Japan and China.

In addition, in July the Japan-China Strategic Dialogue was held; in October various face-to-face meetings at the working level were held, 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, Japan-China Defense Ministerial Meetings were held in June and November.

2024 was also a year in which exchanges between Japanese and Chinese lawmakers and political parties became more active. In May, Liu Jianchao, head of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee, visited Japan and engaged with Japanese officials, including political party officials; in July, Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare TAKEMI Keizo, Chairperson of Diet Affairs Committee MORIYAMA Hiroshi, and Vice-Speaker of the House of Representatives KAIEDA Banri visited China; in August a delegation from the Japan-China Friendship Parliamentarians' Union, led by Chairman NIKAI Toshihiro, visited China for the first time in five years; and a delegation led by Constitutional Democratic Party Secretary-General OKADA Katsuya also visited China.

(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 42.2 trillion Japanese yen (3.8% decrease year-on-year), and China has been the largest trading partner for Japan for 18 consecutive years.

Moreover, according to Chinese statistics, Japan's direct investment in China was about 3.88932 billion U.S. dollars (15.5% increase year-on-year, as estimated from officially published information on investment) in 2023. Japan ranks third in terms of the amount of direct investment to China (Singapore ranks first and the Netherlands ranks second). According to balance of payment statistics, China is Japan's 14th largest

investment destination, and is a source of direct investment income of approximately 2.7 trillion Japanese yen.

In addition, in 2024, economic exchanges at the private sector level between Japan and China became even more active. In January, a joint delegation to China, comprised of the KEIDANREN (Japan Business Federation), Japan-China Economic Association, and the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, visited China for the first time in about four years, where it held meetings with Premier Li Qiang and Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao. In July, the Japan Association for the Promotion of International Trade visited China; in November, the KEIZAI DOYUKAI (Japan Association of Corporate Executives) and a delegation of representatives from the Kansai business community traveled to China; and in December, the 10th Japan-China Entrepreneurs and Former Senior Government Officials Dialogue (Japan-China CEO Summit) was held in Beijing.

(C) Promotion of Mutual Understanding Between Japanese and Chinese People

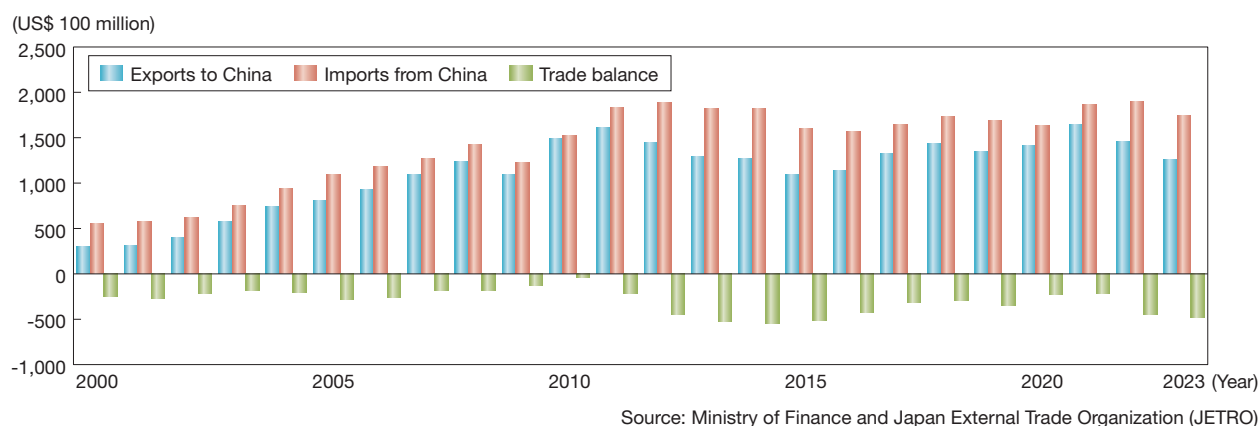
(Current situation of people-to-people exchanges between Japan and China)

In 2024 the number of visitors to Japan from China reached approximately 6.981 million (provisional value from the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO)), marking a substantial increase from approximately 2.425 million visitors in 2023 (finalized value from JNTO) and recovering to roughly 70 percent of the 2019 level.

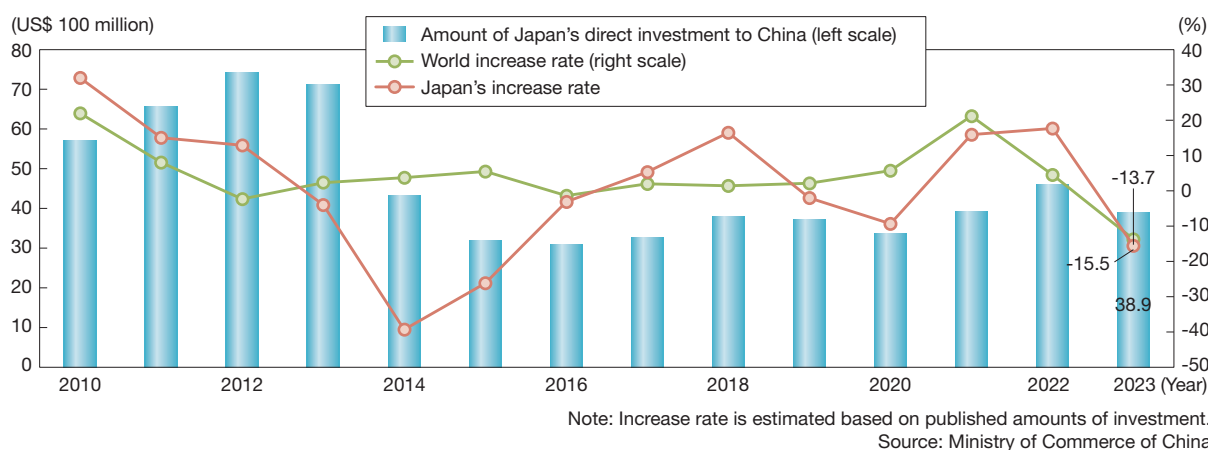
A wide range of cultural, economic, educational, and regional exchanges have been built up between Japan and China.

As for youth exchange programs for the next generation, these were resumed following the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the JENESYS program to promote mutual understanding and understanding of Japan, visiting Chinese high school and university students deepened mutual understanding through interactions with Japanese youth, and sector-specific delegations also deepened their understanding and interest in Japan's initiatives through site visits and briefings. Likewise, the Japan-China International Solidarity Project for Afforestation and Tree Planting invited young people from China to participate in tree-planting activities,

Japan's Value of Trade with China



Japan's direct investment to China



environmental and disaster-prevention seminars, and visits to companies and related facilities, all aimed at raising awareness of environmental and disaster prevention issues and of further promoting understanding of Japan.

Moreover, personnel at various levels and fields such as politics, economics, governments, and academia in the central and regional settings are invited to Japan in an effort to build and strengthen wide-ranging partnerships. Through these exchanges, it is expected that invitees and Japanese counterparts will forge strong relationships and that an accurate understanding of Japan will be fostered.

(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, 2 vessels

belonging to China's State Oceanic Administration intruded into Japanese territorial sea surrounding the Senkaku Islands for the first time.⁽⁸⁾

During 2024, 39 incidents were recorded in which China Coast Guard vessels intruded into the Japanese territorial sea surrounding the Senkaku Islands (there were 34 incidents in 2023 and 28 incidents in 2022), and the number of confirmed days in 2024 in which China Coast Guard vessels navigated the contiguous zone around the Senkaku Islands reached a record high of 355 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 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 2024, in August, a Chinese military aircraft intruded into Japan's territorial airspace, and in September, the aircraft carrier of the Chinese Navy *Liaoning* navigated waters close to the territorial sea between Yonaguni Island and Iriomote Island, both of which were the first incidents of their kind. Continuing on from the

previous year, Japan also confirmed instances in which a Chinese naval survey ship navigated Japanese territorial sea around Yakushima. With regard to the air-space intrusion in particular, Japan has strongly urged the Chinese side, at various levels, to provide a prompt and appropriate explanation, and the Chinese side has acknowledged the facts of the incident and explained that it will strive to prevent similar incidents from recurring. The Government of Japan will remain mindful of this and will continue to monitor China's future actions. As for China-Russia military cooperation around Japan, joint flights by Chinese and Russian strategic bombers were confirmed in November, and joint navigation by Chinese and Russian naval vessels were confirmed in July and October, continuing on from the previous years. On multiple occasions Chinese naval vessels were also confirmed to be navigating waters surrounding Japan including in those around the Senkaku Islands. Japan has serious concerns in light of these recent developments by Chinese military in the sea and airspace around Japan. In addition, because the joint actions by the Chinese and Russian militaries around Japan are serious security concerns for Japan, 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 2013 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 Exclusive Economic Zone (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

(8) 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>





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



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 Japan-China Summit Meeting between Prime Minister Abe and President Xi Jinping in Osaka 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.”

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 lodged protests with the Chinese side at every level, including at the leader and foreign ministerial levels, on multiple occasions, and has repeatedly and strongly called for the immediate

removal of the buoy. In February 2025, it was confirmed that the buoy does not present within Japan's EEZ. Regarding a new buoy confirmed in December 2024 within Japan's EEZ south of Yonaguni Island, the Government of Japan has likewise urged on China to immediately remove it, including at the Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting in December.

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.

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)

Regarding Japan's responses to Chinese fishing vessels engaging in illegal fishing in the waters around the Yamato Bank in the Sea of Japan, the number of vessels warned to depart by Japan Coast Guard patrol vessels and Fisheries Agency enforcement vessels was 57 in 2023 and 32 in 2024, and illegal fishing by Chinese fishing vessels continues to be confirmed. In light of this situation, Japan has repeatedly conveyed its concerns to the Chinese side, making use of opportunities such as the Japan-China High-Level Consultation on Maritime Affairs, and has strongly urged the Chinese side to take effective measures, including strengthened guidance for fishermen.

(Japanese Food Import Restrictions Issue)

Regarding China's import restrictions on Japanese food products, Japan has repeatedly and strongly urged for their elimination as soon as possible, at all levels, including at the leader and foreign ministerial levels.

In August 2023, in response to the start of the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea, the Government of China announced a temporary suspension of all imports of Japanese aquatic products. China's introduction of new measures in addition to existing import restrictions is a response that is not based on scientific evidence, and is entirely unacceptable.

In September, Japan and China announced a "Shared Recognition between Japan and China"⁽⁹⁾ regarding the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea and China's import restrictions on Japanese aquatic products. After conducting additional measures under the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Chinese side will initiate adjustment of its import restrictions on Japanese aquatic products, and will steadily restore imports of Japanese aquatic products. In October, as part of the additional measure, analytical laboratories of participating countries including China, collected sea water samples near

TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station under the IAEA framework. In January 2025, the Government of China announced that its laboratory had completed its analyses and found no abnormality.

At the Japan-China Summit Meeting held in Peru in November, Prime Minister Ishiba and President Xi Jinping confirmed that both countries would properly implement the announcements regarding the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea and the import restrictions on Japanese aquatic products, and Prime Minister Ishiba called for early restoration imports of Japanese aquatic products. At the Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in China in December, Foreign Minister Iwaya and Foreign Minister Wang Yi shared the view that both countries would properly implement the announcements, published in September, regarding the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea and the import restrictions on Japanese aquatic products, as confirmed by the two leaders, and Foreign Minister Iwaya called for the early lifting of import restrictions on Japanese aquatic products.

Furthermore, in response to China's August 2023 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 formal meetings, 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.

Based on the "Shared Recognition between Japan and China" that was announced in September, Japan will continue to call on China to realize the early restoration of imports of Japanese aquatic products at all levels, including at the leader and foreign ministerial levels.

⁽⁹⁾ Ministry of Foreign Affairs website detailing the "Shared Recognition between Japan and China" that was released on September 20, 2024: https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite_000001_00598.html



(Cases of Detainment of Japanese Nationals)

Since May 2015, 17 Japanese nationals have been detained on charges related to China's "national security." 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, one Japanese national died of illness while serving the sentence, six Japanese nationals have returned to Japan after serving their sentences, and as of the end of 2024 five Japanese nationals are being detained (three of which are currently serving their sentence, and two are awaiting trial).

In March 2023, one Japanese national was detained in Beijing. The Government of Japan has strongly urged the Government of China to ensure early release of detained individuals; to increase transparency in law enforcement and judicial processes, including the reasons for detention under the revised Counter-Espionage Law; to appropriately protect the rights of Japanese nationals; and to ensure fairness and impartiality, as well as humane treatment. In 2024, the Government of Japan raised these issues with the Government of China at various levels and opportunities, including at the leader and foreign ministerial levels, such as the Japan-China Summit Meetings in October and November, the Japan-China foreign ministers' telephone call in September, and the Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting in December, and will continue to persistently urge them to do so. 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, the Embassy of Japan in China, and the Consulates General 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 MOFA's Overseas Safety website has been updated to provide more detailed and specific warnings.

(Incidents of Attacks on Japanese School Children in Suzhou and Shenzhen)

In June, in Suzhou City, Jiangsu Province, a man attacked the school bus of the Japanese School of Suzhou while it was stopped at a bus stop, injuring a Japanese mother and child and killing a Chinese female attendant. In September, in Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province, a man attacked and killed a student from the Shenzhen Japanese School as the child was on the way to school. In both cases, the perpetrators were apprehended at the scene and, in January 2025, received death sentences at their respective trials.

In response to these deeply distressing incidents, the Consulate General of Japan in Shanghai and the Consulate General of Japan in Guangzhou provided support to those affected and to their families. At successive meetings at the leader and foreign ministerial levels, Prime Minister Ishiba urged President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang, and Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Foreign Minister Iwaya urged Foreign Minister Wang Yi, to clarify the truth, including the motives; to take concrete measures to ensure the safety of Japanese nationals residing in China, especially that of children; and to take thorough and immediate actions against unfounded, malicious and anti-Japanese social media posts. MOFA, after securing the necessary budgetary measures, has also supported enhanced security measures at Japanese schools across China, including increasing security personnel on school buses, and Japanese embassies and consulates in China have worked with their respective local authorities to exchange information and strengthen cooperation to prevent recurrence.

Ensuring the safety of Japanese nationals traveling or residing abroad is one of the most important responsibilities of the Government of Japan, and it will continue to strongly urge the Chinese side to guarantee the safety of Japanese nationals in China and will advance necessary advisories and other measures.

(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 2024, Japan carried out excavation, recovery, and destruction operations of Abandoned Chemical Weapons (ACW) in the Harbaling area of Dunhua City, Jilin Province, and destruction operations of ACW in Harbin City, Heilongjiang Province, and Wuhan City, Hubei 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 2024 approximately 119,000 ACW have been destroyed).

(2) Taiwan**A Domestic Affairs and Economy**

On January 13, 2024, Taiwan held presidential and legislative elections, and Vice President Lai Ching-te, an official candidate of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), won the presidential election with 40.05% of the vote. In the legislative elections, the Kuomintang (KMT) party gained 15 seats for a total of 52 seats, making it the largest party, while the DPP lost 11 seats for a total of 51 seats, and the Taiwan People's Party (TPP), which was formed in 2019, gained 3 seats for a total of 8 seats, but no party gained a majority. In addition, Ko Wen-je, chairman of the TPP, was arrested in August on suspicion of corruption, indicted in December, and resigned as chairman the following month.

The presidential inauguration took place on May 20, with Lai Ching-te becoming the 16th President. In June, President Lai announced three new bodies as part of Taiwan's development strategy: the National Climate Change Committee, the Whole-of-Society Defense Resilience Committee, and the Healthy Taiwan Promotion Committee.

Taiwan's economy is expected to see its annual real GDP growth rate rise from 1.31% in 2023 to 4.6% in 2024 (forecast), due to strong demand for AI and information and communications equipment.

B Cross-strait Relations and External Relations

From May 23 to 24, immediately following President Lai Ching-te's inauguration, the People's Liberation Army Eastern Theater Command of China conducted military exercises, code-named "Joint Sword-2024A," around Taiwan Island as a "strong punishment for the separatist acts of 'Taiwan independence' forces and a stern warning against the interference and provocation by external forces." On May 26, China published "Opinions on Punishing Crimes of Separatism and Inciting Separatism by 'Taiwan independence' Diehards in Accordance with Law," and then on May 30 announced that, effective June 15, it would cancel zero-tariff treatment on 134 items, including lubricants, under the Cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA).

On September 25, China suspended zero tariffs on 34 agricultural and fishery products. Following this, on October 14, after the Double Ten Day celebrations in Taiwan on October 10, the PLA Eastern Theater Command held the "Joint Sword-2024B" exercises in the Taiwan Strait, as well as to the north, south, and east of Taiwan Island. According to Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense, a total of 153 Chinese military aircraft were confirmed around Taiwan, the highest number of aircraft confirmed in a single day to date.

From November 30 for one week, President Lai visited the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, and Palau, nations that diplomatically recognize Taiwan, stopping in Hawaii and Guam while en route. Following his trip, on December 9, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense announced that Chinese naval fleets and coast guard vessels had entered the Taiwan Strait and the Western Pacific and were engaged in activities such as long-distance navigation in blue water areas, although China had not announced any military exercises.

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. Since 2021, including most recently at the G7 Apulia Summit, the G7 Leaders' Communiqués have consistently reaffirmed the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and called for the peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues.

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. The Apulia G7 Leaders' Communiqué mentioned for the first time in a G7 summit-level outcome document that "we support Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organizations, including in the World Health Assembly and WHO technical meetings, as a member where statehood is not a prerequisite and as an observer or guest where it is."

In addition, the United States-Japan Joint Leaders' Statement issued at the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting between Prime Minister Ishiba and U.S. President Trump on February 7, 2025, confirmed that "The two leaders emphasized the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait as an indispensable element of security and prosperity for the international community. They encouraged the peaceful resolution of cross-Straits issues, and opposed any attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force or coercion. The two leaders also expressed support for Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organizations."

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 based on the 1972 Joint Communiqué between Japan and China. Following Taiwan's presidential election in January, Foreign Minister Kamikawa released a statement congratulating Taiwan on the smooth implementation of the democratic election and Lai Ching-te on his election victory, and approximately 170 people from Japan, including members of the Diet and friendly organizations, attended the presidential inauguration ceremony on May 20.

On February 24, the opening ceremony for Japan Advanced Semiconductor Manufacturing, Inc.'s (JASM) Kumamoto first plant was held, and in a video message Prime Minister Kishida announced the Government of Japan's support for a second plant, thereby demonstrating further progress in Japan-Taiwan cooperation in the semiconductor supply-chain sector.

On June 5, Japan lifted a ban on imports of Taiwanese dragon fruit (purple-fleshed and red-fleshed varieties), and on October 30, Japan lifted a ban on imports of Taiwanese Dragon-Tiger grouper, a luxury fish from Taiwan. In addition, Taiwan announced on September 25 that it would ease import restrictions imposed after TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station accident, thereby enabling the export of all foods distributed in Japan. On the other hand, import restriction measures such as the requirement to submit certificates remain in place. Japan continues to persistently urge Taiwan to lift these restrictions as soon as possible based on scientific evidence.

Japan and Taiwan both experience many large-scale disasters, and in the past have offered each other assistance when disasters occur. In 2024, when the Noto Peninsula earthquake occurred in Japan on January 1, the Taiwanese authorities donated 60 million Japanese yen in relief funds, and the people of Taiwan provided a great deal of support through special support accounts. In addition, when the Hualien earthquake occurred in Taiwan on April 3, the Government of Japan provided Emergency Grant Aid of 1 million U.S. dollars to the Taiwanese side through the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association, and at the private level as well a great deal of relief money was collected and donated to the disaster-stricken areas.

In terms of people-to-people movements, while the number of overseas travelers from Japan is still recovering, the number of visitors from Taiwan to Japan reached 6.04 million, significantly exceeding the 4.98 million in 2019 and setting a new record high.

(3) Mongolia

A Domestic Affairs

Since around January, Mongolia has suffered extensive damage from the dzud (heavy snow disaster unique to Mongolia). Many people were affected, property

damage occurred, and livestock animals, which are vital to the livelihoods of the nomads in the country, also died in large numbers. In response, the UN and many nations, including Japan, provided emergency assistance.

In June, the 9th State Great Hural (Parliament) general election was held under a system of both large electoral districts and proportional representation, with the number of seats significantly expanded to 126 due to constitutional amendments. As a result, the Mongolian People's Party, the ruling party before the election, won with an outright majority (68 seats), but the main opposition party, the Democratic Party, performed strongly and won 42 seats, and a third party, the HUN Party, also won 8 seats. In July, reappointed Prime Minister L. Oyun-Erdene called for the opposition parties to join the government, and formed a grand coalition cabinet consisting of the Mongolian People's Party, the Democratic Party, and the National Labour Party.

In August, the new administration formulated a government action plan for 2024-2028 under an agreement between the ruling coalition parties to cooperate to quickly and effectively resolve pressing issues related to social and economic development. Through this action plan, the Government of Mongolia set a total of 620 policy objectives, including the implementation of 14 mega infrastructure projects, with the aim of effectively implementing existing medium- and long-term development policies such as Vision 2050 and the New Recovery Policy.

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 2024 as well, the leaders of Viet Nam and Kazakhstan visited Mongolia in September and October, respectively, and President U. Khurelsukh, Prime Minister Oyun-Erdene, and Foreign Minister B. Battsetseg, each actively visited foreign countries and engaged in active dignitary diplomacy.

In terms of Mongolia's relations with its two neighboring countries, Russian President Putin and Chinese Vice President Han Zheng each visited Mongolia in September to mark the 85th anniversary of the victory in the Nomonhan Incident. Furthermore, in October on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Pakistan, Prime Minister Oyun-Erdene held a trilateral leaders' meeting between Mongolia, China and Russia to discuss cooperation among the three countries.

C Economy

In 2024, the Mongolian economy continued to record positive growth, with robust exports of mineral resources such as coal and copper to China. The inflation rate was 6.8%, more stable than in 2023. The economic growth rate in the third quarter of 2024 increased by 5.0% when compared to the previous year. In addition, Mongolia's trade value for 2024 increased by 3.9% in terms of exports and increased by 25.5% in terms of imports when compared to the previous year.

D Japan-Mongolia Relations

In regard to relations with Japan, high-level exchanges and dialogues continued in 2024. In addition, various anniversary events were held in both countries to mark the 50th anniversary of the conclusion of the Agreement on the Establishment of Cultural Relations between Japan and Mongolia. In response to the damage caused by the Noto Peninsula earthquake in January, the Government of Mongolia provided 100,000 U.S. dollars in aid, and many Mongolian citizens sent messages of support and condolences.

In May, Chairman of the State Great Hural G.Zandanshatar visited Japan to attend the 29th Nikkei Forum, "Future of Asia." In addition, Prime Minister Kishida's planned visit to Mongolia, which was scheduled for August, was postponed due to the response to the earthquake in Japan, but he held a Japan-Mongolia Summit Meeting with President Khurelsukh during the UN General Assembly in September. At the meeting, the two leaders reaffirmed that the principles set out in the 2022 Joint Statement, such as maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law, are becoming increasingly important amid the deepening of conflict and division

in the international community. The two leaders also concurred to further strengthen and expand the cooperative relationship between the two countries, which are “Special Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity,” in both political and economic areas.

In particular, with regard to bilateral cooperation and with a view to promoting economic exchange, in November the 11th Japan-Mongolia Government and

Business Sector Joint Committee and the second meeting of the Sub-Committee on Cooperation established under the Japan-Mongolia Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) were separately held in Mongolia. Furthermore, in December, the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of Mongolia concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology was signed in Mongolia.

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 achieving the normalization of 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 2024, North Korea repeatedly conducted launches of ballistic missiles and others with high frequency and in various manners, including intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM)-class ballistic missiles and launches 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 and seek the complete dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs in cooperation 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, as well as a matter of infringement of the sovereignty of Japan in nature. Japan continues to call on North Korea to implement the May 2014 Japan-North Korea agreement (the agreement in Stockholm)⁽¹⁰⁾ 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.

In 2024, North Korea launched ballistic missiles 11 times (at least 22 launches). On January 14, it launched a ballistic missile, and it also launched ballistic missiles which it announced as “super-large multiple rocket launchers” on March 18. On April 2, it launched a ballistic missile which it announced as a “new type intermediate-range solid-fueled ballistic missile loaded with hypersonic gliding warhead;” and on April 22, it launched ballistic missiles which it announced as “super-large multiple rocket launchers with simulated nuclear warheads.”

On May 27, North Korea notified that it would launch a satellite between that day and June 4, and it conducted a launch using ballistic missile technology on the same day. On May 27, it announced that “the ‘Malligyong-1-1’ military reconnaissance satellite had been launched” and that “the launch failed due to the air blast during the first-stage flight.” Furthermore, on May 30, it launched ballistic missiles which it announced as “super-large multiple rocket launchers.”

⁽¹⁰⁾ 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.

North Korea also launched a ballistic missile on June 26, and announced that “it had successfully conducted the separation and guidance-control test of individual mobile warheads.” Ballistic missiles were also launched on September 12 and 18.

On October 31, North Korea launched an ICBM-class ballistic missile from near Pyongyang. It was estimated that the missile flew for approximately 86 minutes with a maximum altitude exceeding 7,000 kilometers, and this was the longest flight time and highest altitude to date. North Korea referred to the launched ballistic missile as the “latest intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) ‘Hwasongpho-19,’” and it was reported that North Korean President of the State Affairs Commission Kim Jong-un declared on the spot that North Korea would never change its line of bolstering up its nuclear forces. Furthermore, at least seven ballistic missiles were launched on November 5.

Faced with these series of launches in violation of Security Council resolutions, Japan, as a member of the Security Council from 2023 to 2024, has diligently worked to take a resolute action at the Security Council, including by calling a series of meetings in cooperation with relevant countries including the U.S. and the ROK, but the Security Council has not been able to take unified action due to the reluctance of some countries. On March 28, the draft Security Council resolution on the activities of the Panel of Experts for UNSC 1718 Sanctions Committee was rejected due to the veto of Russia. As a result, the Panel of Experts, which had extended its mandate by unanimous vote every year since its establishment based on UN Security Council resolution 1874 in 2009, and had played an important role in improving the effectiveness of relevant Security Council resolutions, ended its activities at the end of April. In response to the termination of the mandate of the Panel of Experts, like-minded countries including Japan, the U.S., and the ROK released a joint statement on October 16 and established the Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (MSMT).⁽¹¹⁾ The MSMT is expected to contribute to the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions by sharing

information among participating states on violations and evasions of sanction measures, and by disseminating that information to the international community.

In addition, the Government of Japan has taken measures against North Korea, designating a total of 144 entities and 133 individuals as being subject to asset freezes and other measures.

With regard to North Korea's nuclear activities, on September 13, North Korea publicized that President Kim had inspected the “Nuclear Weapons Institute” and “the production base of weapons-grade nuclear materials” that includes a uranium enrichment facility, and announced that President Kim had set forth “important tasks concerning a long-term plan for increasing the production of weapons-grade nuclear materials.” During the 10th Session of the 14th Supreme People's Assembly held in January, President Kim was reported to have stated that, “if the enemies ignite a war, our Republic will resolutely punish the enemies by mobilizing all its military forces including nuclear weapons.”

Furthermore, North Korea continues to engage in illicit cyber related activities, which is suspected to be the funding source for its nuclear and missile programs. In the past reports on measures against North Korea based on UN Security Council resolutions, the Panel of Experts for the UNSC 1718 Sanctions Committee pointed out that North Korean cyber groups continued to target cryptocurrency-related companies and exchanges, that North Korean IT workers generated income by obtaining work with false identification, and that their earnings were used as a source of funding for North Korea's nuclear and missile development.

(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

⁽¹¹⁾ MSMT: Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (See the Special Feature on page 247.)
For the joint statement on the establishment of the MSMT, refer to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website:
https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite_000001_00652.html



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 heads of state and foreign ministers of various countries. On November 5, a G7 Foreign Ministers' Statement on the launch of an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile by the DPRK was 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 stable collaboration at multiple levels, including through holding meetings among leaders, Foreign Ministers, and Vice-Ministers. At the leaders' level, the Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting was held on November 15 on the occasion of the APEC Summit in Lima, Peru, and a Japan-U.S.-ROK Joint Leaders' Statement was released after the meeting. At the foreign ministerial level, Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meetings were held on February 22 on the occasion of the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and on September 23 in New York, U.S.; the Japanese, U.S. and ROK foreign ministers also held a Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Telephone Meeting on October 31, in which they strongly condemned the ICBM-class ballistic missile launch. At the vice-ministerial level, Japan-U.S.-ROK vice foreign ministerial meetings were held near Washington, D.C., U.S., on May 31 and in Seoul, ROK, on October 17, and Joint Statements were released after each meeting. Furthermore, Japan, the U.S., and the ROK announced the establishment of the Trilateral Coordinating Secretariat at the Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting in November, and its first meeting was held on November 20, where the three countries reviewed the advancement of the trilateral cooperation in a wide range of fields, and concurred to work together to advance the trilateral coordination through the Trilateral Coordinating Secretariat to further accelerate the momentum. On December 9, a Japan-U.S.-ROK Trilateral Meeting on North Korea was held face to face in Tokyo, where the participants reaffirmed the importance of the close coordination among Japan, the U.S., and the ROK that

remains ensured even in the face of various complicating situations. Furthermore, in the joint statement released at the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting held between Prime Minister Ishiba and President Trump on February 7, 2025, both leaders affirmed the importance of the Japan-U.S.-ROK trilateral partnership in responding to North Korea and upholding regional peace and prosperity. A Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting was then held on February 15.

Furthermore, as part of the Self-Defense Forces' surveillance operations and the Japan Coast Guard's patrolling activities, 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 transfers⁽¹²⁾ 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, New Zealand 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. Monitoring and surveillance activities were also conducted in the waters surrounding Japan by naval vessels such as vessels of the U.S. Navy and the ROK Navy, the UK Royal Navy offshore patrol vessel HMS *Spey*; the Royal Australian Navy destroyers HMAS *Hobart* and HMAS *Sydney*; the Royal Netherlands Navy frigate HNLMS *Tromp*; the Royal Canadian Navy frigates HMCS *Montréal*, HMCS *Vancouver*, and HMCS *Ottawa*; the Italian Navy offshore patrol vessel ITS *Raimondo Montecuccoli*; the German Navy frigate FGS *Baden-Württemberg* and replenishment ship FGS *Frankfurt am Main*; the Royal New Zealand Navy sustainment replenishment ship HMNZS *Aotearoa*; and the French Navy French Navy frigate *Prairial*. 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

(12) 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.

Security Council resolutions are implemented fully and effectively.

In addition, to address North Korea's cyber activities and block its cyber-enabled sanctions evasion, Japan-U.S.-ROK Trilateral Diplomacy Working Groups for Foreign Ministry Cooperation on North Korea's Cyber Threats were held on December 7, 2023, March 29, 2024, and September 6, 2024. On March 26, 2024, together with Japan's National Police Agency, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, MOFA issued an "Alert for Private Companies on North Korean Information Technology (IT) Workers."

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 his January 2025 Policy

Speech, Prime Minister Ishiba stated, "The abductions issue involves more than kidnapping incidents; it is a matter of infringement of the sovereignty of Japan in nature. With the aging of the abductees and their families, the abductions issue is a top priority for my administration; it is a humanitarian and time sensitive issue with no time to spare. By returning to the starting point of the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, I am committed to making every effort, with firm determination, to realize the return of all abductees at the earliest possible date, as well as to resolve the outstanding issues of concern between Japan and North Korea."

(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 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

In January, President Kim Jong Un sent a message of condolence to Prime Minister Kishida following the Noto Peninsula earthquake. In his January 2025 Policy Speech, Prime Minister Ishiba stated, "By returning to the starting point of the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, I am committed to making every effort, with firm determination, to realize the return of all abductees at the earliest possible date, as well as to resolve the outstanding issues of concern between Japan and North Korea."

(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 Ninth Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit in May, Prime Minister Kishida asked for the continued support of the leaders of the ROK and China for the immediate resolution of the abductions issue and gained their understanding. At the G7 Apulia Summit in June, the G7 leaders confirmed to continue working closely together in dealing with North Korea, including the abductions issue. During the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Leaders' Meeting in September as well, Prime Minister Kishida took the opportunity to reconfirm the necessity of immediate resolution of the abductions issue. Furthermore, at the Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting in November, Prime Minister Ishiba once again expressed his appreciation for continued support from President Biden of the U.S. and President Yoon Suk Yeol of the ROK on the abductions issue, and the Japan-U.S.-ROK Joint Leaders' Statement released after the summit also called for the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

Regarding the U.S., at the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting in April, Prime Minister Kishida asked for continued understanding and cooperation of the U.S. for the immediate resolution of the abductions issue, and once again gained full support from President Biden. At the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting in September, the two leaders also held a candid discussion on the latest situation related to North Korea, including the abductions issue. At the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting held in November between Prime Minister Ishiba and President Biden, they concurred on continuing working closely on issues regarding North Korea including the abductions issue. At the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting held between Prime Minister Ishiba and President Trump in February 2025, Prime Minister Ishiba asked for continued understanding and cooperation of the U.S. for the immediate resolution of the abductions issue, and gained full support from President Trump.

Regarding China, at the Japan-China Summit in November, the two leaders exchanged views on the situation regarding North Korea, including the abductions issue, and at the Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit in May, Prime Minister Kishida asked for continued support of the leaders of the ROK and China

for the immediate resolution of the abductions issue and gained their understanding.

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 September, President Yoon reiterated his support on the immediate resolution of the abductions issue, and at the Japan-ROK Summit Meetings in October and November, President Yoon reiterated the support to Japan regarding the abductions issue.

On June 12, a public meeting of the UN Security Council was held to discuss the human rights situation in North Korea, including the abductions issue, and after the meeting, the European Union (EU) and 57 like-minded countries referred to the abductions issue in the joint stakeout. Furthermore, the resolution on the Situation of human rights in North Korea that was submitted by the EU and co-sponsored by Japan was adopted without a vote at the UN Human Rights Council in April and the UN General Assembly in December. Japan will continue to closely coordinate and cooperate with relevant countries, including the U.S., toward the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

C North Korea's External Relations, etc.

(A) U.S.-North Korea Relations

From 2018 to 2019, President Trump and President Kim Jong Un held two summit meetings and met in Panmunjom. In October 2019, U.S.-North Korea working-level talks were convened in Stockholm, Sweden. However, since then, no concrete progress has been made in dialogues between the U.S. and North Korea.

In October 2022, the Biden administration 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.

Meanwhile, in August, at a ceremony of transferring and receiving “New-type Tactical Ballistic Missile System,” it was reported that President Kim had said about U.S.-North Korea relations that “negotiations and confrontation are among our options, but we must be more thoroughly prepared to cope with the latter--this is the review and conclusion we have derived from the 30-odd years of dealing with the United States, and it is the keynote of our consistent policy toward the United States.”

In response to a series of provocative acts by North Korea, including ballistic missile launches, and to illicit arms transfers from North Korea to Russia, in 2024, the U.S. decided to additionally designate individuals and entities as subject of its own sanctions against North Korea in January, March, May, July, September, and December, respectively.

(B) Inter-Korean Relations

President Yoon Suk Yeol has demonstrated his intention to pursue unification through promoting dialogue while maintaining deterrence and pressure on North Korea, by for example announcing the “August 15 Unification Doctrine,” a unification plan based on freedom and human rights in August. Meanwhile, North Korea announced that President Kim stated in December 2023 at the 9th Enlarged Plenary Meeting of the 8th Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) 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, not the consanguineous or homogeneous ones anymore,” and announced the abandonment of the goal of unification. In addition, at the Supreme People’s Assembly in January 2024, it was reported that President Kim had stated that “it is necessary to delete such expressions in the constitution as ‘northern half’ and ‘independence, peaceful reunification and great national unity,’” and that “the constitution of the Republic should be revised in consideration of such matters and the issue should be discussed at the next session of the Supreme People’s Assembly.”

In November 2023, 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

launch of a “military reconnaissance satellite” and other provocations. In response, North Korea issued a statement saying that it would no longer be bound by the agreement. Furthermore, in response to the arrival of leaflets from the ROK, from May 2024 North Korea intermittently released large balloons carrying rubbish and leaflets toward the ROK. In June, in response to those provocations by North Korea, the ROK suspended the agreement’s operation in full. Since late 2023, it was reported that North Korea was preparing to sever overland links with the ROK, and in October, North Korea announced that it had blown up and blocked sections of the inter-Korean railways and roads on its side. That same month, North Korea claimed that drones had infiltrated Pyongyang from the ROK and dispersed leaflets, denouncing the ROK military as the “chief culprit” of this “hostile infringement upon the DPRK sovereignty” and repeatedly warning that it would retaliate forcefully against any future provocation of the same kind.

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 March, April, May, July, and November, respectively.

(C) China-North Korea Relations

2024 marked the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and North Korea. Both sides designated it as a “Friendship Year,” and it was reported that Zhao Leji, Chairman of China’s National People’s Congress Standing Committee visited North Korea in April to attend the opening ceremony of the “Friendship Year.”

Trade between China and North Korea, which is estimated to account for more than 90% of North Korea’s entire external trade, was significantly reduced compared to pre-COVID-19 levels due to traffic restrictions following the global spread of COVID-19. While the China-North Korea trade volume in 2023 recovered to pre-COVID-19 levels, it then fell below this in 2024.

(D) Russia-North Korea Relations

Following the September 2023 Russia-North Korea Summit Meeting at which the two agreed on strategic

and tactical cooperation, President Putin visited North Korea in June 2024 for the first time in approximately 24 years, and held a summit meeting with President Kim, and they signed the “Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.” At their joint press statements afterward, President Kim stated that Russia-North Korea relations had entered into an alliance. In December, the instruments of ratification for this Treaty were exchanged in Moscow, and the Treaty entered into force.

During this period, in January 2024, following the confirmation of Russia's use of North Korean missiles against Ukraine, as well as North Korea's export of ballistic missiles and Russia's procurement of these missiles, Japan, together with the U.S. and other like-minded countries, released the “Joint Statement on DPRK-Russia Ballistic Missile Transfers,” condemning them in the strongest possible terms. On June 28 and December 18, at the request of Japan, the U.S., and the ROK, the UN Security Council convened open briefings on Russia-North Korea military cooperation and other issues, and, prior to the June 28 meeting, “the Joint Statement on the Unlawful Arms Transfer by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to Russia” was issued by 48 like-minded countries, including Japan, the U.S., and the ROK, as well as the EU. Furthermore, in a Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Telephone Meeting on October 31, the foreign ministers condemned in the strongest terms, the deepening military cooperation between North Korea and Russia, including continued illegal arms transfers to Russia and the deployment of North Korean troops to Russia. Subsequently, on November 5 and December 16, the G7, as well as the ROK, New Zealand and Australia released “Joint Statement from Foreign Ministers Condemning DPRK-Russia Cooperation,” and the G7 Foreign Ministers' Statement released at the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting held on November 26 also expressed serious concerns over the deployment of the North Korean troops to Russia and their use on the battlefield against Ukraine. These moves to advance Russia-North Korea military cooperation are of grave concern not only because they lead to further deterioration of the situation in Ukraine, but also affect the security of the region surrounding Japan.

(E) Other Issues

In 2024 a total of 13 drifting or wrecked wooden vessels presumed to be from North Korea were discovered (22 in 2023) 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 exclusive economic zone (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

North Korea is strengthening its military capabilities, including nuclear and missile development, based on the “Five-Year Plan for the Development of National Defense Science and the Weapons System” and the “Five-Point Goals for Developing of National Defense Capability” that were reportedly presented at the 8th Congress of the WPK in January 2021. When inspecting military-related facilities in September, President Kim reportedly stated that they could confidently attain the goal of military hardware production within the five-year plan period, and at Military Hardware Exhibition held in November, with regard to the results for 2024, it was reported that he had stated, “[We have] made a decisive stride in attaining the goal of building up the defenses, advanced by the 8th Congress of the Party.” In addition, North Korean media reported at the end of July that flooding caused by record-breaking heavy rains had isolated over 5,000 residents in Sinuiju City and Uiju County, North Pyongan Province. In response to the announcement of the willingness to offer humanitarian assistance from China, Russia and other countries, during his visit to the flood-hit areas in August, President Kim expressed his gratitude for the willingness of the countries and international organizations to provide humanitarian assistance, while also stating that the Party and the Government would rely entirely on “the potentialities of our country” in the ongoing rehabilitation. After the floods occurred,

President Kim was reported to have inspected sites of reconstruction of flood-hit areas multiple times, and to have instructed the construction of modern housing and other recovery work in the affected areas. Although approximately 13,000 disaster-affected residents had been temporarily housed in Pyongyang, in December it was reported that new homes and other facilities had been built or repaired and that the disaster-affected residents had returned to their hometowns.

(B) Economy

At the 10th Session of the 14th Supreme People's Assembly in January, President Kim reportedly designated 2024 as the year to “ensure the practical guarantee for the fulfillment” of the ‘Five-Year Plan for National Economic Development’ (2021-2025), which primarily focuses on self-reliance. He also pledged to vigorously advance the ‘regional development 20×10 policy,’ aiming to construct modern regional industry factories in 20 counties annually and complete the project nationwide within 10 years. In a September speech marking the 76th anniversary of the founding of North Korea, President Kim reportedly stated that despite numerous difficulties, North Korea had maintained the overall growth trend of its economy and was steadily progressing toward the goals set for 2024. He added that construction work under the “regional development 20×10 policy” had passed the line of 90% completion and must be finished by the end of the year.

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, which was formed in May 2022, announced four major reforms in pensions, healthcare, education, and labor, and sought to advance a variety of policies. As for healthcare reform, however, there was a fierce conflict with the medical community over plans to increase medical school admissions, which led to medical workers resisting by going on strikes or taking other actions.

In the general election held in April, the ruling People Power Party continued to be a minority party, and the largest opposition party, the Democratic Party of Korea, secured a majority on its own. In this situation, the opposition party, acting on its own, passed budget proposals, various bills, and impeachment motions against high-ranking government officials, and in response, the President repeatedly exercised his right to request reconsideration (veto).

On the night of December 3, President Yoon declared emergency martial law, citing administrative paralysis caused by the opposition party, for the first time in 44 years. However, before dawn on December 4, the National Assembly passed a “resolution calling for the lifting of emergency martial law,” and President Yoon lifted it. In the National Assembly, a motion was submitted to impeach President Yoon on the grounds that the declaration of emergency martial law violated the Constitution, and on December 14, this motion was passed. As a result, President Yoon's authority was suspended, Prime Minister Han Duck-soo became Acting President, and the Constitutional Court of Korea was set to consider the merits of President Yoon's impeachment.

The opposition party then submitted an impeachment motion against Prime Minister Han Duck-soo on the grounds including that his attendance at the Cabinet meeting when the declaration of the emergency martial law was decided constituted, among other things, complicity in the acts of rebellion, and this was passed on December 27. As a result, Prime Minister Han Duck-soo's authority to perform his duties was also suspended, and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance Choi Sang-mok became Acting President.

Meanwhile, on December 9, a joint investigation unit consisting of police and other organizations requested an arrest warrant for President Yoon for failing to respond to repeated requests to appear, and President Yoon was arrested and detained on January 15, 2025, becoming the first sitting President to be arrested and detained. The prosecutors then indicted President Yoon under detention as a suspect for rebellion.

(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 August 2024, President Yoon held 197 summit meetings with 113 countries.

As for relations with the U.S., Minister of Foreign Affairs Cho Tae-yul visited the U.S. in February and held his first ROK-U.S. Foreign Minister’s Meeting with Secretary of State Blinken since assuming office, and also held another ROK-U.S. Foreign Minister’s Meeting in March when Secretary of State Blinken visited the ROK to attend the 3rd Summit for Democracy in Seoul. Furthermore, when President Yoon attended the NATO Summit held in Washington, D.C. in July, he held a ROK-U.S. Summit Meeting with President Biden, reaffirming the U.S.-ROK Washington Declaration announced by the ROK and U.S. leaders during President Yoon’s state visit in April 2023, and adopting the Joint Statement on U.S.-ROK Guidelines for Nuclear Deterrence and Nuclear Operations on the Korean Peninsula, which calls for a strong response to North Korea’s nuclear provocations.

In terms of relations with China, Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul visited China in May and held his first ROK-China Foreign Ministers’ Meeting with Foreign Minister Wang Yi since assuming office. Approximately two weeks later, President Yoon met with Premier Li Qiang when the Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit was held in Seoul with Premier Li’s attendance. Since then, Foreign Ministers’ Meetings between the ROK and China have been held on the occasion of multilateral conferences, and high-level exchanges have continued, including diplomacy and security dialogues and vice foreign ministerial strategic dialogues.

(C) Economy

In 2024, the GDP growth rate in the ROK increased from 1.4% to 2.0% in comparison to the previous year. Total value of exports increased 8.1% year-on-year to approximately 683.7 billion U.S. dollars, while total value of imports decreased 1.6% year-on-year to approximately 632.1 billion U.S. dollars, resulting in a trade surplus of approximately 51.6 billion U.S. dollars. With this, the ROK overcame the trade deficit that has continued since 2022 and achieved the biggest surplus since 2018 (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.” During the same year, the “New Government’s Energy Policy” and the “National Semiconductor Powerhouse Strategy” were released. In December 2024, after the declaration of emergency martial law, anxiety over the political situation increased, and the ROK’s Composite Consumer Sentiment Index (CCSI) of that December fell to 88.4, the largest drop since the COVID-19 pandemic (Bank of Korea Consumer Survey). In addition, the real GDP growth rate (preliminary figure) for the fourth quarter (October to December) remained at an increase of just 0.1% from the previous quarter, below the Bank of Korea’s forecast (0.5% increase), mainly due to sluggish consumption and construction investment following the declaration of emergency martial law.

In recent years, the ROK has had a rapidly declining birthrate and aging population. In 2024 the declining birthrate issue remained extremely serious, with a total fertility rate of 0.75 children per woman.

B Japan-ROK Relations

(A) Bilateral Relations

The ROK is an important neighboring country with which Japan should cooperate as partners in dealing with various issues of the international community. Following the significant progress in the Japan-ROK relations in 2023 by the leadership of the two leaders,

both countries continued close communication including between the two leaders and foreign ministers, and cooperation in various fields was further expanded in 2024.

On May 26, Prime Minister Kishida visited the ROK to attend the Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit. At the Japan-ROK Summit Meeting,⁽¹³⁾ the two leaders concurred to continue the “shuttle diplomacy” and close bilateral dialogue that had been ongoing since the previous year. They also shared the intention to accelerate progress in cooperation in hydrogen, ammonia, and quantum technologies, and to consider cooperation in the areas of industrial decarbonization and critical minerals. The two leaders also concurred to further strengthen cooperation among Japan, the U.S., and the ROK. At the Japan-ROK Summit Meeting held on the sidelines of the NATO Summit in Washington, D.C. in July, the two leaders shared the view that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable, and concurred to further deepen coordination between NATO and Indo-Pacific partners.

On September 6, Prime Minister Kishida visited the ROK again. In his twelfth summit meeting in person with President Yoon, the two leaders overviewed the progress in Japan-ROK relations and affirmed that they would continue to enhance bilateral cooperation and exchanges towards the year 2025, which marks the 60th anniversary of the normalization of Japan-ROK relations. The two leaders welcomed the signing of the Japan-ROK Memorandum through diplomatic channels on cooperation of protecting each other's nationals in third countries, as a symbol of the expanding scope of the bilateral relationship. They also affirmed that they would work with each other for the success of the EXPO 2025, Osaka, Kansai, Japan and the 2025 APEC Leaders' Meeting in the ROK.

On October 2, immediately after Prime Minister Ishiba assumed office, the Japan-ROK summit telephone call was held, in which the two leaders affirmed to continue close communication between the governments of Japan and the ROK, and concurred on working closely together bilaterally and trilaterally



Japan-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting (January 13, Seoul, ROK)

among Japan, the ROK and the U.S. regarding the current situation of serious concern, including issues regarding North Korea such as the nuclear and missile issues. President Yoon reiterated his support to Japan regarding the abductions issue. About a week later, on October 10, Prime Minister Ishiba and President Yoon held their first meeting in person on the occasion of the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings in Vientiane, Laos. At the Japan-ROK Summit Meeting held during the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Lima, Peru in November, the two leaders shared the intention to promote Japan-ROK relations comprehensively in the areas such as politics, security, economy, culture and social security.

After the domestic situation in the ROK became fluid following President Yoon's declaration of emergency martial law in December, Japan and the ROK confirmed that in light of the current strategic environment, the importance of Japan-ROK relations remains unchanged, and that they continue close communication between the two governments, through the two telephone calls between the foreign ministers of Japan and the ROK, as well as the telephone call between Prime Minister Ishiba and Acting President and Prime Minister Han Duck-soo. On January 13, 2025, Foreign Minister Iwano Kim visited the ROK and reaffirmed the importance of close cooperation, including on issues regarding North Korea, between Japan and the ROK, and among Japan, the ROK and the U.S., in light of the current strategic environment, through a series of

(13) https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/na/kr/pageite_000001_00372.html



events including a meeting with Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul.

In addition to these high-level exchanges, there has also been active communication at the working level, including the Japan-ROK Vice-Ministerial Strategic Dialogue, the Japan-ROK Security Dialogue, and the Japan-ROK High-Level Economic Consultations over the past year.

(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 2018 final judgements by the ROK Supreme Court.

In response, on the same day, the Government of Japan made public its view, 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.⁽¹⁴⁾

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 Government of the ROK 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.

As of December 2024, payments have been made by the ROK foundation to 21 plaintiffs who are CWKs. The Government of the ROK has stated that it will continue to make efforts to gain the understanding of the plaintiffs, and the Government of Japan will continue to maintain close communication with the ROK side.

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 Cooperation between Japan and the Republic of Korea. However, from the perspective of facilitating 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

⁽¹⁴⁾ See References on the Issue of Former Civilian Workers from the Korean Peninsula (CWKs)

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 statue⁽¹⁵⁾ 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.⁽¹⁶⁾ 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 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

⁽¹⁵⁾ 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.

⁽¹⁶⁾ See References on the Issue of Comfort Women

urge the ROK to steadily implement the Japan-ROK Agreement. (See page 35 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.⁽¹⁷⁾ 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 2024, 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.⁽¹⁸⁾ 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) Exchanges and Travel

As for travel between Japan and the ROK, since early 2020, due to the strengthening of border measures related to the spread of COVID-19, the number of travelers between the two countries significantly decreased, and in 2021 approximately 30,000 people made trips between the two countries. However, in October 2022 after the border measures were eased and flights between Japan and the ROK including the Haneda-Gimpo route resumed operations, the number of travelers has gone up to about 1.31 million, with an increase in tourism. 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 2024, the number solidly increased, surpassing 10 million people for the first time since 2018 and reaching a record high of 12.04 million people.

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 2024, 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 105,000 people from both countries participating. The Government of Japan, through "Japan Friendship Ties Programs (JENESYS)," is fostering mutual understanding, primarily between youth from Japan and the ROK, and is promoting friendly and cooperative relationships for the future. In 2023, the Governments of Japan and the ROK decided to fully resume face-to-face exchange programs, which had been conducted online due to the spread of COVID-19, and to double the number of exchanges compared

⁽¹⁷⁾ 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>

⁽¹⁸⁾ In April Democratic Party of Korea lawmakers Kim Byung-wook, Min Byeong-deok, and Back Hye-ryun landed on the island, and in May Rebuilding Korea Party representative Cho Kuk landed on the island. ROK armed forces conducted military training related to Takeshima in August 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.

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to the previous year. In 2024, both governments have expressed their intention to further expand the number of exchanges to approximately 900, thereby invigorating exchanges among the next generation of youth in 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 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 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),⁽¹⁹⁾ 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.⁽²⁰⁾

A cultural property⁽²¹⁾ which had been stolen, and taken to the ROK and for which the Government of Japan had been urging the Government of the ROK to promptly return, was returned from the ROK government to its rightful owner, a Japanese temple on January 24, 2025. Upon receipt from the Daejeon District Prosecutors' Office, Kannon-ji Temple has temporarily lent it to the ROK-side temple in light of the ROK-side temple's request to borrow the property for a 100-day memorial service. Once the 100-day memorial service concludes, the property will be promptly transferred to Tsushima.

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,⁽²²⁾ addressing the issue of atomic bomb survivors living in the ROK,⁽²³⁾ and helping Hansen's disease patients admitted to sanitariums in the ROK.⁽²⁴⁾

C Economy

The total value of trade between the two countries amounted to approximately 11.7863 trillion Japanese yen in 2024. Japan is the ROK's fourth largest trading partner, and the ROK is Japan's third largest trading

⁽¹⁹⁾ 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).

⁽²⁰⁾ Ministry of Foreign Affairs website with information on the issue of the name "Sea of Japan": <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/maritime/japan/index.html>

⁽²¹⁾ 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.

⁽²²⁾ 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.

⁽²³⁾ 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.

⁽²⁴⁾ 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.

(20)



partner. The ROK's trade deficit with Japan increased by approximately 2.2% from a year earlier, reaching approximately 2.2693 trillion Japanese yen (Trade Statistics of Japan, Ministry of Finance). Japanese direct investment in the ROK significantly increased, totaling approximately 6.12 billion U.S. dollars (up 375.6% from the previous year) (figures published by the ROK Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy).

Japan and the ROK also cooperate as parties to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement, and work together in various economic frameworks, including the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Asia-Pacific Economic

Cooperation (APEC), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). In December, the 16th Japan-ROK High-Level Economic Consultations⁽²⁵⁾ were held to discuss a wide range of topics, including bilateral economic relations and the international economic situation, furthering discussions on expanding Japan-ROK economic cooperation.

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.

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 280 million people) and situated in a strategic location on sea lanes such as the Strait of Malacca, and plays a leading role in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Moreover, as ASEAN's sole G20 member and as one of the leading countries in the Global South, its importance in addressing regional and international challenges has been increasing.

President Joko Widodo served two terms over a ten-year period beginning in October 2014 and concluding in October 2024. During his time in office, he primarily focused on economic sectors, most notably infrastructure development. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic growth, which had consistently remained around 5 percent, turned negative in 2020. However, it has recovered to positive growth in the mid-5 percent range since 2022. Japan has actively cooperated in various fields including infrastructure development, which was a priority area for President Joko.

In February, Indonesia held its presidential election, and Prabowo Subianto, who was then Minister

of Defense, was elected. Prior to his inauguration in October, President-elect Prabowo visited Japan in April, where he exchanged views with Prime Minister Kishida and other government officials, confirming that they would further advance cooperation between the two countries.

In July, Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Foreign Minister Retno Lestari Priansari Marsudi on the occasion of the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings, and in August, Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of Trade Zulkifli Hasan signed a Protocol Amending the Agreement between Japan and the Republic of Indonesia for an Economic Partnership.

Former Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs KOMURA Masahiko attended the Indonesian Presidential inauguration ceremony in October as the Ambassador on Special Mission. In the inaugural speech, President Prabowo stated that he would focus on reducing poverty and on improving self-sufficiency in food and energy. After his inauguration, the cabinet list was announced, and a new administration was formed. Members of political parties that had won seats in the parliamentary election which was held alongside the presidential election joined the cabinet or expressed

⁽²⁵⁾ Ministry of Foreign Affairs website detailing the 16th Japan-ROK High-Level Economic Consultations on December 20:
https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite_000001_00864.html



their support for the administration, resulting in a de facto all-ruling party system in the national legislature.

In October, when Indonesia's new government was inaugurated, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone call with Foreign Minister Sugiono, confirming their collaboration to further strengthen the relationship between the two countries as "Comprehensive Strategic Partners," and confirming their close cooperation on regional and international affairs. In November, Foreign Minister Iwaya and Foreign Minister Sugiono held informal talks on the sidelines of the APEC Ministerial Meeting in Peru, and Prime Minister Ishiba and President Prabowo also held informal talks on the sidelines of the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting. In these talks between the leaders and the foreign ministers, they concurred to further promote cooperation in the field of security in addition to the economy. Such interactive communications demonstrate that active exchanges have been taking place at a high level between the two countries.

(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, since 2022 it has returned to positive growth of around 5.0%.

In terms of domestic affairs, the general election held in July 2023 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 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. In 2023, the relationship between

the two countries was elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. On the international stage, Japan and Cambodia have drawn on their collaboration in mine-clearance efforts in Cambodia to assist third countries, most notably Ukraine, with mine-clearance action.

In July, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Cambodia and, in a Japan-Cambodia Foreign Ministers' Meeting, concurred to promote "three new cooperation approaches" in social infrastructure development, maritime connectivity enhancement, and humanitarian mine action, aimed at strengthening Cambodia's sustainability and co-creating social value, and affirmed their commitment to cooperate in regional and international fora.

(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 May, Singapore saw a change in prime minister for the first time in 20 years, with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Lawrence Wong becoming the fourth Prime Minister. Prime Minister Wong, who continues to serve as Finance Minister, is promoting economic policies, measures to address the low birthrate, and housing policies on the basis of the People's Action Party's stable domestic governance. In May, Prime Minister Kishida held a telephone call with Prime Minister Wong, shortly after his inauguration, and welcomed the progress in cooperation across a wide range of areas, concurring to coordinate on various issues to further strengthen bilateral relations.

At the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings in Laos in July, and again during a Japan-Singapore Foreign Ministers' Telephone Meeting in October, Foreign Minister Kamikawa exchanged views with Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan, confirming that, with Singapore serving as ASEAN Country Coordinator for Japan from summer 2024 and looking ahead to the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 2026, Japan and Singapore will work together closely. 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 7,600 participants from ASEAN countries and other regions (as of the end of July 2024).

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 a constitutional monarchy located at the heart of the Southeast Asian mainland (Mekong region). It is also one of the original member states of ASEAN, which was born from the “Bangkok Declaration” in 1967, and holds significant geopolitical importance. 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 key part of supply chains, with close to 6,000 Japanese companies operating and more than 70,000 Japanese nationals living in Thailand.

Continuing on from 2023, 2024 was also a year of significant domestic political changes. In August, the Constitutional Court ordered the dissolution of the Move Forward Party, the largest opposition party in the House of Representatives (legislature), as well as the suspension of eligibility for election for all executive members of the party for 10 years, ruling that its electoral pledge to amend the *lèse-majesté* law during the previous year's legislative election carried an intent to overthrow the constitutional monarchy. The Court also found that the appointment of a minister who had previously been convicted violated the ethical standards set forth in the Constitution and consequently removed Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin from office. As a result, former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's second daughter and leader of the Pheu Thai Party, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, became Prime Minister, and a new government was formed in September.

Bilateral relations between Japan and Thailand have continued to advance steadily. In May, Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Foreign Minister Maris Sangiampongsa, who was visiting Japan, and confirmed their intention to strengthen cooperation in a variety of fields, including the economy. In October, on the sidelines of the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings, Prime Minister Ishiba had an informal talk with Prime Minister Paetongtarn, and in November, at the APEC

Ministerial Meeting in Peru, Foreign Minister Iwaya had an informal talk with Foreign Minister Maris, where they shared the intention to deepen cooperation both bilaterally and in international fora.

(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, which celebrated the 20th anniversary of its independence, has realized peace and stability with the support of the international community, and it has also been making nation building efforts based on the principle of democracy. As a result of the election for the National Parliament held in May 2023, 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 the highest national priority. On the diplomatic front, Timor-Leste still continues to work toward its accession to ASEAN in coordination with relevant countries. In May 2023, ASEAN adopted a roadmap for Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN.

In July, Foreign Minister Kamikawa attended the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings and held a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Bendito dos Santos Freitas, where they exchanged views on bilateral relations and various issues facing the region and the international community.



Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Komura paying a courtesy call on President Ramos-Horta (August 13, Timor-Leste)

In August, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Komura visited Timor-Leste and met with President Ramos-Horta, Prime Minister Gusmão, and Vice Prime Minister Francisco Kalbuadi Lay. They confirmed that upgrading the relationship between the two countries to a “Comprehensive Partnership” was a major achievement, and that they would use this visit as an opportunity to further develop bilateral relations, deepen cooperation in a wide range of areas such as security, economy, and people-to-people exchanges, and cooperate on regional and international situations. During the meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Bedito dos Santos Freitas, the two countries signed and exchanged notes for Grant Aid for “the Project for the Improvement of Guido Valadares National Hospital.” In October, a memorandum of cooperation on the technical intern training program was signed, and concrete cooperation is progressing between related organizations and private companies. As an example of accepting Timor Leste technical intern trainees, Kochi Prefecture has accepted 16 trainees in the agricultural sector and two in the accommodation sector.

(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, and in 2023 it maintained an economic growth rate of 5.5%, making it one of the ASEAN countries with the highest economic growth rates. Now in his third 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.

Between Japan and the Philippines, following mutual visits by the two countries' leaders in 2023, 2024 also

saw visits at various levels, thereby further advancing the deepening of their Strategic partnership. In July, Foreign Minister Kamikawa attended the Second Japan-Philippines Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting (“2+2”) that was held in Manila and signed the Japan-Philippines Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA). In August, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUGE Yoshifumi paid a courtesy call on Secretary for Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo in the Philippines. In addition, at the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings in October, Prime Minister Ishiba held informal talks with President Marcos and confirmed that the two countries would further strengthen their cooperation. Moreover, during the Japan-Philippines Foreign Ministers' Telephone Meeting in October and at the Japan-Philippines Foreign Ministers' Meeting held during the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in November, Foreign Minister Iwama confirmed collaboration on addressing regional and international issues, including the issue of the South China Sea, and on pursuing the peaceful resolution of disputes. In the security field, in December, continuing on from 2023, Japan and the Philippines signed and exchanged notes concerning the provision of support equipment, including the Air Surveillance Radar System that has already been transferred, under the Government of Japan's Official Security Assistance (OSA). In addition to the bilateral cooperation between Japan and the Philippines, there has also been steady progress in trilateral cooperation between Japan, the U.S., and the Philippines. Following the March Japan-U.S.-Philippines Vice Minister's Meeting, in April the inaugural Japan-U.S.-Philippines Summit was held, and in December the director-level Japan-U.S.-Philippines Maritime Dialogue took place, demonstrating that concrete initiatives in a wide range of areas, such as security and economic security, are continuing to advance Japan-U.S.-Philippines cooperation. (See the Special Feature on page 74.)

(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. March 2024 marked the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, and Crown Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah and Crown Princess Sarah of Brunei made an Official Visit to Japan. Crown Prince Al-Muhtadee Billah met with Prime Minister Kishida, during which they exchanged views on bilateral cooperation and regional and global issues, and elevated their bilateral relationship to a "Strategic partnership." Japan and Brunei are also continuing to build a close relationship between the imperial and royal families. (See the Column on page 75.) Brunei is an important country for stable energy supply to Japan. Around 50% of Brunei's liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports are bound for Japan, and LNG from Brunei makes up around 4% 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, however growth rebounded to 8.02% in 2022 and 5.05% in 2023, and the 2024 economic growth rate is estimated at approximately 6.0%. In a short span of time, Viet Nam's top leadership underwent changes, including the successive resignations of the State President and the National Assembly Chairman and the death of General Secretary of the Communist Party of Viet Nam Nguyen Phu Trong (the state funeral was attended by former Japanese Prime Minister SUGA Yoshihide as a Special Envoy of Prime Minister Kishida), but as of October a new leadership team under General Secretary To Lam, President Luong Cuong, Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, and National Assembly Chairman Tran Thanh Man has taken office.

Japan and Viet Nam established diplomatic relations on September 21, 1973. In 2023, on the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, the Japan-Viet Nam bilateral relationship was elevated to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity in Asia and the World," and over five hundred commemorative events were held in both countries.

Under the new bilateral partnership, 2024 continued to see active visits by dignitaries and high-level meetings. In August, Foreign Minister Bui Thanh Son visited Japan, where he and Foreign Minister Kamikawa held the Viet Nam-Japan Cooperation Committee meeting and a Japan-Viet Nam Foreign Ministers' Meeting, at which they concurred to advance cooperation in a



Japan-Viet Nam Summit Meeting (October 11, Vientiane, Laos; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

variety of fields, including economic affairs, people-to-people exchanges, subnational exchanges, and security. In September, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Komura visited Viet Nam to participate in an international forum hosted in Ho Chi Minh City. Prime Minister Ishiba held a Japan-Viet Nam Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Chinh on the sidelines of the October ASEAN-related Summit Meetings and a Japan-Viet Nam Summit Meeting with President Cuong at the November APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, sharing the intention to deepen cooperation in all areas, including security. In December, National Assembly Chairman Man visited Japan and met with House of Representatives Speaker NUKAGA Fukushima and House of Councillors President SEKIGUCHI Masakazu, where they concurred on the importance of strengthening people-to-people exchanges. Furthermore, the number of Vietnamese nationals residing in Japan, primarily technical intern trainees, is continuing to increase, from approximately 40,000 in 2011 to over 600,000 by the end of June 2024, making Vietnamese nationals the second largest number of foreign residents in Japan by country after China.

(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.

In May, Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar made his second visit to Japan since December 2023 and held a Japan-Malaysia Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Kishida. During their talks, the two leaders concurred to cooperate in further developing Japan-Malaysia relations under the Comprehensive and Strategic Partnership. In February and April, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and the Royal Malaysian Navy conducted joint exercises. In the field of human resources development, under the Look East Policy,

which was begun by Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad in 1982, approximately 28,000 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 (MJIIT), which was opened in September 2011, a base for Japanese-style engineering education in ASEAN countries. Moreover, in September 2024 the University of Tsukuba opened a branch campus in Malaysia in order to further contribute to the development of human resources who will bear the future of Malaysia, and there are active exchanges in the fields of education and the humanities. 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, clashes have erupted across the country between the military and both pro-democracy forces and various ethnic armed organizations, resulting in a deteriorating security situation and numerous civilian casualties. Moreover, a severe shortage of foreign currency, together with disruptions to fuel imports and rising inflation, has dealt a heavy blow to people's livelihoods and economic activity.

On the political front, the enactment in February of the People's Military Service Law introduced conscription, prompting many young people to flee abroad and perpetuating social unrest. Against this backdrop, the State Administration Council, chaired by the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, conducted a national census beginning in October in preparation for a general election, and released provisional results at the end of December. Notably, the National League for Democracy (NLD), which had won a landslide in the previous general election, was deregistered under the Political Parties Registration Law newly enacted in 2023.

On February 1, 2024, marking three years since the coup d'état, the Government of Japan issued a Foreign Minister's statement condemning the absence of any progress toward political reforms, including the immediate cessation of violence, the release of detainees, and the prompt restoration of a democratic political system,

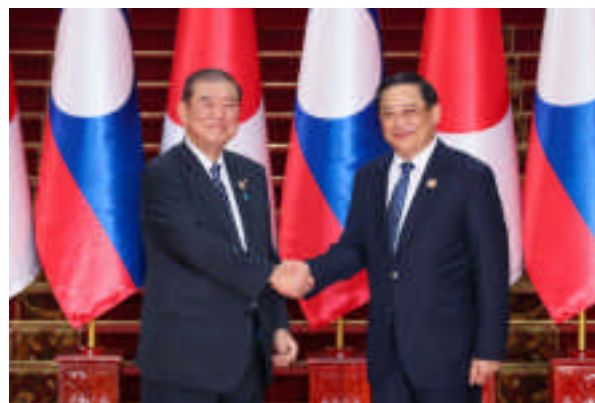
which Japan has consistently urged the Myanmar military to undertake. The statement called on the military to release NLD leaders, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, and to concretely engage in peaceful problem-solving through dialogue among all parties. In May, while visiting Japan, representatives of ethnic organizations paid a courtesy call on Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Komura, where they exchanged views on the situation in Myanmar.

Based on the belief that it is important for ASEAN to respond in a unified manner to resolve the situation, Japan is working with the international community to fully support ASEAN's efforts, including the implementation of the ASEAN "Five-Point Consensus."⁽²⁶⁾ In addition, as a member of the UN Security Council, Japan has actively contributed to various discussions on Myanmar and has responded in cooperation with the international community, including co-sponsoring the Human Rights Council resolution (April) and the UN General Assembly resolution (December) on the human rights situation in Myanmar.

Furthermore, in order to improve the worsening humanitarian situation in Myanmar, since the coup d'état on February 1, 2021, through international organizations and NGOs, Japan has been continuously providing humanitarian assistance in a way that directly benefits the people of Myanmar, totaling approximately 152.00 million U.S. dollars (as of the end of December 2024).

(11) Laos

Laos is a landlocked country bordering China, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Viet Nam, and therefore is a key country for Mekong connectivity. Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone has continued to address economic and fiscal issues on the domestic front, and at the 7th Ordinary Session of the National Assembly's 9th Legislature in June, he stated that he was working to resolve challenges such as inflation, the depreciation of the kip (the currency of Laos), surging prices, and external debt.



Japan-Laos Summit Meeting (October 11, Vientiane, Laos; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

Meanwhile, Laos served as the ASEAN Chairmanship for 2024, and hosted the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings in July and the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings in October.

Between Japan and Laos, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held Japan-Laos Foreign Ministers' Meetings with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Saleumxay Kommasith in May and July, and in August Prime Minister Sonexay held a Japan-Laos Summit telephone call with Prime Minister Kishida. In October, Prime Minister Ishiba made his first overseas visit since assuming office by travelling to Laos to attend the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings, where he held a Japan-Laos Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Sonexay. The two leaders shared the intention that they would aim to elevate bilateral relations to a "Comprehensive and Strategic Partnership" on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2025.

During Prime Minister Ishiba's official visit to Laos in October, Japan decided to provide grant assistance for the expansion and renovation of facilities at Vientiane International Airport, Laos's primary gateway, to enhance its convenience and safety. Additionally, through cooperation on road rehabilitation, clearance of unexploded ordnance, and disaster risk reduction, Japan and Laos are working to strengthen connectivity within the region's economy and to bolster Laos's resilience.

⁽²⁶⁾ 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 FEATURE

Japan-U.S.-Philippines Cooperation and Future Potential — Aiming for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific

Today, as attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion are evident around the world and as the international community faces complex crises, maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law has become an urgent priority. Based on this recognition of the current situation, Japan believes that in addition to traditional cooperative frameworks such as bilateral and multilateral cooperation, it is essential to deepen cooperation across a wide range of fields with like-minded countries based on the Japan-U.S. Alliance in order to maintain peace and prosperity in the region. Accordingly, Japan is working to strengthen cooperative frameworks such as the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad), Japan-U.S.-ROK, and Japan-U.S.-Australia.

One of the newest frameworks for cooperation among like-minded countries in which Japan participates is the Japan-U.S.-Philippines trilateral partnership. As fellow maritime nations sharing vital sea lanes, Japan and the Philippines have a natural basis for collaboration, and Japan has long sought to strengthen its relationship with the Philippines, a like-minded country with which Japan shares fundamental values and principles. Since 2023 in particular, Japan has worked with both the U.S. and the Philippines to deepen trilateral cooperation under the Japan-U.S.-Philippines framework.

On April 11, during Prime Minister Kishida's official visit to the U.S., he held the first-ever Japan-U.S.-Philippines Summit with U.S. President Joseph Biden and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. The three leaders confirmed the importance of freedom of navigation and overflight for regional peace and security, and concurred to oppose and resolutely respond to any unilateral attempts by China to change the status quo by force in the South China Sea and the East China Sea.

Based on the Joint Vision Statement released at this inaugural summit, Japan, the U.S., and the Philippines are elaborating Japan-U.S.-Philippines cooperation across security and economic domains. For example, in the maritime security sphere, the three countries' navies have conducted multilateral joint exercises in the South China Sea. Additionally, the countries' coast guard authorities convened their first high-level meeting in June and are continuing to strengthen relations. In December, the first Japan-U.S.-Philippines Maritime Dialogue was held in Tokyo. In the Dialogue, given the current situation that the U.S.-Philippines and Japan-Philippines bilateral cooperation in the maritime domain has become even closer, the participants confirmed the practical cooperation promoted bilaterally and concurred to continue and enhance the momentum of trilateral cooperation beyond 2025.

In the economic sphere, based on the Joint Vision Statement's emphasis on the need for close coordination in dealing with economic coercion, Japan, the U.S. and the Philippines held a Trilateral Discussion on countering Economic Coercion and promoting Economic Resilience in October in Manila. In addition, recognizing the importance of promoting the development of strategically critical infrastructure, the Luzon Economic Corridor was launched to support connectivity on Luzon Island. Furthermore, efforts are also being made in a wide range of fields, including telecommunications and energy. In November, the Cabinet Decision approved that Japan would provide Japan-made Open RAN¹-related equipment to the Philippines in order to develop a secure communications environment in the Philippines. Moreover, cooperation is also deepening in the cyber domain, with the 1st Japan-U.S.-Philippines Cyber-Digital Dialogue being held in Singapore in October.

As the international community faces a turning point in history and as the security environment surrounding Japan grows increasingly severe, Japan, the U.S., and the Philippines, which share fundamental values and principles, are expected to play a major role in realizing a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)." Japan will continue to strengthen and further develop Japan-U.S.-Philippines cooperation for the peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and the international community.



Japan-U.S.-Philippines Summit (April 11, Washington, D.C., U.S.; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

¹ 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.

COLUMN

Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Brunei

— Looking Ahead to the Future for the Strategic Partnership

■ Relations between Japan and Brunei

Are you familiar with the country of Brunei? Located in northern Borneo, Brunei is a small nation of approximately 450,000 people and an area of about 5,800 square kilometers, roughly the same size as Mie Prefecture in Japan. Despite its small size, Brunei is a Muslim sultanate with a long history spanning more than 600 years. Backed by abundant energy resources, its per-capita gross domestic product (GDP) ranks second in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), after Singapore, reflecting the stable development it has achieved.

Although Brunei may not be widely known in Japan, it is in fact a country with deep ties to Japan. When Brunei gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1984, Japan was one of the first to establish diplomatic relations with it, and over the ensuing 40 years, the two countries have built an excellent relationship of friendship and cooperation. One of the key pillars of the Japan-Brunei relationship is economic relations, including the energy sector. Brunei's key industry is the production and export of liquefied natural gas (LNG), and 54.7% of Brunei's LNG exports are bound for Japan; about 20 Japanese companies have operations in the country.

Brunei is a constitutional monarchy, and there are active exchanges between the Imperial Family of Japan and the Royal Family of Brunei. His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, the current 29th Sultan, first visited Japan in 1970 to observe the Japan World Exposition 1970 (Expo '70) in Osaka, prior to Brunei's independence. Since then, he has visited Japan multiple times both officially and unofficially, and most recently, he attended the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation in 2023. From the Japanese side, Their Imperial Highnesses Prince and Princess Hitachi visited Brunei in 1996 at the invitation of the Sultanate for international goodwill, and in 2004 His Majesty the Emperor, His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince at the time, attended the wedding of Crown Prince Billah in Brunei.

■ The 40th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Brunei

In recent years, Japan-Brunei relations have expanded beyond economic cooperation and exchanges between the Imperial and Royal Families to also encompass security and defense collaboration, as well as people-to-people and cultural exchanges. Like Japan, Brunei is a maritime nation facing the South China Sea, an important sea lane for Japan. Recognizing Brunei's geopolitically important location, since 2020 the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and the Royal Brunei Navy have conducted a total of seven goodwill exercises. In the people-to-people and cultural domains, in order to deepen mutual understanding, particularly among the younger generations of both countries and foster future bonds across diverse fields, youth exchanges and inter-university student exchanges are flourishing, through Japan's Friendship Ties Program "JENESYS" program.¹ Against the backdrop of this grassroots engagement, Japanese food, anime, and games now gain high popularity in Brunei.

In 2024, Japan and Brunei celebrated the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. In March, His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Crown Prince and Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office, paid an Official Visit to Japan and held a meeting with Prime Minister Kishida, elevating bilateral relations to a strategic partnership. In order to further facilitate people-to-people exchange between the two countries, pursuant to the Notes Verbale exchanged on the occasion of the afore-mentioned



Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress met with Their Royal Highnesses the Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Brunei (March 8, Tokyo; Photo: Imperial Household Agency)



Reception commemorating the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Brunei was held, with attendance by His Imperial Highness Crown Prince Akishino (March 8, Tokyo; Photo: Imperial Household Agency)

Official Visit to Japan, a new visa waiver measure was introduced in December, extending the period of stay without visa for nationals of both countries from 14 days to 30 days.

Looking ahead to the next 10 years, 20 years, and beyond, Japan will continue to place importance on and further develop its relationship with Brunei, a key partner sharing the vision of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” based on the rule of law.

- 1 JENESYS is a program intended to encourage understanding of Japan's politics, economy, society, culture, history, and foreign policy, and to cultivate people with great affinity toward or knowledge of Japan by inviting, dispatching, and facilitating online exchanges with emerging future leaders who have influence in public relations between Japan and the Asia-Pacific region.

5 South Asia

(1) India

India is now the world's most populous country, with the fifth largest economy, and is strengthening its presence in the international community. In domestic affairs, the third Modi administration was inaugurated in June following the 18th general election for the lower house. In terms of its economy, India has been achieving steady economic growth through various economic initiatives, including “Make in India, Make for the World.” 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, India hosted the Voice of Global South Summit, 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 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 one of the greatest potentials 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 2024, Japan and India had frequent high-level exchanges of views, including summit meetings. In March, the 16th Japan-India Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue was held in Japan. Immediately following India's general election for the lower house in June, a Japan-India Summit Meeting was held on the sidelines of the G7 Apulia Summit in Italy. In August, the Third Japan-India “2+2” Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting was convened in India, during which both sides discussed on cooperation to realize FOIP, on bilateral security and defense collaboration,



Japan-India Summit Meeting (October 10, Vientiane, Laos; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

and on regional and international issues, and concurred to continue working closely. In September, Prime Minister Kishida held a Japan-India Summit Meeting on the occasion of the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Leaders' Meeting in the U.S. In October, on the margins of the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings in Laos, Prime Minister Ishiba and Prime Minister Modi held a Japan-India Summit Meeting at which they confirmed their intention to further promote cooperation in the fields of the economy, security, and people-to-people exchanges. Moreover, various meetings at the working level were convened between the two countries. A Japan-India Bilateral Consultations on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation was held in April, and in November the inaugural Japan-India Dialogue on Economic Security, including Strategic Trade and Technology, was convened.

(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. Regarding domestic affairs, a general election was held in February, with major political parties including the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) agreeing to form a coalition, and PML-N leader Shahbaz Sharif becoming Prime Minister. 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.

In relations with Japan, In October, the 8th Japan-Pakistan High-Level Economic Policy Dialogue was held, during which both sides exchanged views on the Government of Pakistan's reform initiatives and key priorities, measures to promote Pakistan's export and investment, and economic cooperation. In recent

years, Japan has provided grant aid to Pakistan, mainly in the fields of health, water and sanitation, education, and disaster prevention. Most recently, Japan has concentrated its support on social sectors closely linked to people's livelihoods, namely disaster prevention and climate change, health, education, and water and sewerage, where Japan's strengths are most applicable. In the field of disaster prevention, following the 2022 floods in Pakistan, Japan provided an additional 77 million U.S. dollars in assistance, and in November the two countries signed and exchanged Notes concerning a Flood Management Enhancement Project in the Indus River Basin. In the health sector, in December the two countries signed and exchanged Notes regarding a Project for the Recovery of Maternal and Child Health Equipment in Flood-Affected and Surrounding Areas.

(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 5.78% in 2023). 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. In domestic affairs, following the political upheaval in August, former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who had led the government for over fifteen years, stepped down, and the Interim Government was formed under Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus. Chief Adviser Yunus has pledged that, after implementing necessary reforms to state systems, a free, fair, and participatory election will be held at the earliest possible opportunity. Additionally, with the deterioration in peace and order in Rakhine State of Myanmar in August 2017, more than 750,000 displaced persons have flooded into Bangladesh, 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.

As for relations with Japan, under the "Strategic Partnership," in March the two countries have decided to launch negotiations for the Japan-Bangladesh Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), holding the



Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs HOSAKA Yasushi delivering remarks at the opening ceremony for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD30) Global Dialogue (May 15, Dhaka, Bangladesh)

first round of negotiations in May, the second round in November, and the third round in December. The number of Japanese affiliated companies operating in the country has increased from 61 in 2005 to 315 in 2023. 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, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, HOSAKA Yasushi visited Bangladesh to attend the 30th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD30) Global Dialogue in May, and the 5th Japan-Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Level Consultation was held in June.

(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. On the domestic front, the presidential election in September, Sri Lanka's first national election since the economic and political crisis of 2022, resulted in the victory of Anura Kumara Disanayake, leader of the opposition coalition National People's Power (NPP) and chairman of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), on a platform that included anti-corruption measures. In the subsequent parliamentary election in November, the NPP won 159 seats out of 225, more than two-thirds of the total, and secured a decisive victory. In the economic sphere, in July, the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on debt restructuring was completed between Sri Lanka and the members

of the creditor committee co-chaired by Japan, France, and India, and the Government of Sri Lanka's intention to swiftly conclude a bilateral agreement with Japan was confirmed in writing. In response, Japan resumed disbursements under existing yen-loan projects in Sri Lanka. In June, the International Monetary Fund provided a third tranche of approximately 330 million U.S. dollars under its Extended Fund Facility (EFF) for Sri Lanka. The Government of Sri Lanka continues to implement the various reforms required under the EFF programme. In its foreign policy, Sri Lanka fundamentally adheres to non-alignment and neutrality while placing importance on balanced diplomacy.

In relations with Japan, following on from 2023, 2024 also saw active visits by dignitaries: in May, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Sri Lanka, and in July, Foreign Minister M.U.M. Ali Sabry visited Japan, with a Japan-Sri Lanka Foreign Minister's Meeting being held on each occasion. In economic cooperation, development assistance with attention to inclusivity and vulnerability reduction have been prioritized, with improving livelihoods in conflict-affected areas and addressing climate change and disaster prevention presenting ongoing challenges. In this context, in March, Japan and Sri Lanka signed and exchanged Notes on the Japanese Grant Aid for the "Economic and Social Development Plan," including the provision of equipment to support women in the Northern Province and oil-spill response equipment.

(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, who assumed his post in December 2022, maintained his government through coalition reshuffles, but in July the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (UML) withdrew from the administration and announced plans to work with the largest opposition, the Nepali Congress Party (NC), to form a new government. Consequently, Prime Minister Dahal's third coalition collapsed, and party chair KP Sharma Oli (UML), backed by the UML, the NC, and other parties holding a majority in the House of Representatives, was appointed as Prime Minister.

Economically, Nepal's growth rate from 2023 to 2024 remained at 2%, and escaping from low growth has remained a challenge. In foreign affairs, Nepal traditionally adheres to non-alignment and neutrality, maintains strong economic and cultural ties with India, and also sustains good relations with China.

As for Nepal's relationship with Japan, the two countries have traditionally built friendly relations over many years through people-to-people exchanges such as mountaineering, and recently the number of Nepalese people studying Japanese has been increasing. As of 2024, over 200,000 Nepalese people reside in Japan and are active in various fields. In May, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Nepal for the first time in five years as Foreign Minister. 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 April, excavation was completed on the 2,688-meter Nagdhunga main Tunnel, the first mountain transportation tunnel in Nepal. Upon its opening in 2026, the tunnel is expected to streamline the region's transport network, accommodate rapidly growing traffic demand, shorten travel times, and enhance safety, thereby contributing to the social and economic development of the surrounding area.

(6) Bhutan

Bhutan is a landlocked country located between China and India. Guided by its Gross National Happiness (GNH)⁽²⁷⁾ framework, Bhutan's 13th Five-Year Plan (2024-2029) adopts a ten-year strategic roadmap aimed at transforming the economy into a high-income GNH model by 2034 and achieving a target GDP of 5 billion U.S. dollars by 2029. Under this plan, the Government of Bhutan is working to strengthen equitable, high-quality healthcare and education, safeguard sovereignty and territorial integrity, establish a trusted governance ecosystem, and accelerate economic growth. In domestic affairs, a general

election for the lower house of Parliament was held in January, 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 56 countries, including Japan, the EU, and neighboring countries, and has close ties with India in areas such as national defense. Relations with Japan are marked by a rich history of exchanges between the Japanese Imperial Family and the Bhutanese Royal Family.

(7) The Maldives

Situated in a strategically important location on sea lanes, the Maldives is an important partner to Japan in realizing FOIP. On the domestic front, following the presidential election held in September 2023, President Mohamed Muizzu's administration took office in November 2023. In the parliamentary election conducted in April, the ruling People's National Congress (PNC) secured two-thirds of the seats, thereby consolidating President Muizzu's governing mandate. Economically, 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. In foreign affairs, President Muizzu has pursued a policy of balanced diplomacy since taking office.

In terms of relations with Japan, 2023 saw reciprocal visits between the two countries' foreign ministers, and, at the Japan-Maldives Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July 2023, both sides concurred to advance bilateral cooperation across a wide range of fields. Given the Maldives' strategic location in the Indian Ocean, it provides a vital staging point for Japanese Self-Defense Force ships and aircraft operating overseas; in March, the destroyer JS *Akebono* made a port call in Malé. Additionally, in economic cooperation, in March Japan and the Maldives signed and exchanged notes for grant assistance aimed at strengthening maritime security, including the grant of one customs patrol craft.

⁽²⁷⁾ Gross National Happiness (GNH): A unique concept proposed by the Royal Government of Bhutan in contrast to Gross National Product (GNP). It reexamines an excessive focus on economic growth and development and emphasizes the importance of development that contributes to the happiness of the people, based on four pillars: (a) Economic growth and development, (b) Preservation of cultural heritage and promotion of traditional culture, (c) Conservation and sustainable use of a rich natural environment, (d) Good governance.

6 Oceania

(1) Australia

A Brief Summary and Overview

With the region facing a variety of issues, 10 years have passed since Japan and Australia confirmed their “Special Strategic Partnership,” built upon shared fundamental values and strategic interests, and cooperation between the two countries 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 multilayered cooperation and collaboration in all areas toward the stability and prosperity of the international community. Moreover, Japan-Australia collaboration has also been steadily reinforced in multilateral formats, including the Japan-U.S.-Australia and Japan-Australia-India-U.S. frameworks.

Additionally, Japan and Australia are further developing mutually complementary economic relations through the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which marks the tenth anniversary of its effectuation, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) that entered into force in December 2018, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement that entered into force in January 2022. Australia is Japan’s third-largest trading partner, and Japan is Australia’s second-largest trading partner.

At the leaders’ level, in September Prime Minister Kishida held a Japan-Australia Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, where the two leaders had a candid exchange of views on bilateral cooperation, including security cooperation, as well as on regional and international affairs, and reaffirmed the broadly aligned strategic recognition between Japan and Australia. Prime Minister Kishida welcomed Australia’s participation in the Friends of Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, and the two leaders confirmed that they would continue to work closely together to realize a world without nuclear weapons. In a Japan-Australia Summit

Telephone Call in October, soon after Prime Minister Ishiba took office, the two leaders concurred that Japan and Australia would strengthen cooperation with like-minded countries such as the United States (U.S.), the ROK, and India, as well as multilateral cooperation such as Japan-Australia-India-U.S. and also shared the intention to work together on issues in the fields of resources and energy, as well as economic security. During the October Japan-Australia Summit Meeting, the two leaders had an exchange of views on the situation in East Asia, such as the response to North Korea, including the nuclear and missile issues and the abductions issue, and concurred to further strengthen consultations and cooperation between Japan and Australia in responding to such issues.

In February, Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Foreign Minister Penny Wong held a Japan-Australia Foreign Ministers’ Telephone Call where the two ministers concurred to continue to work together to further strengthen the relations with the Pacific Island countries. At their July Japan-Australia Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, Foreign Minister Kamikawa stated that she would like to further enhance cooperation under the “Special Strategic Partnership” between Japan and Australia toward the realization of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP).” In September, the two foreign ministers convened a Japan-Australia Foreign Ministers’ Working Dinner, during which they had a candid exchange of views on regional and international affairs, including on strengthening ties with the Global South. In October, shortly after Foreign Minister Iwaya assumed his appointment, a Japan-Australia Foreign Ministers’ Telephone Meeting was held in which the two foreign ministers concurred to cooperate across a wide range of areas, including security, and to enhance the vibrant and multilayered people-to-people exchanges between Japan and Australia, which underpin the strong bilateral relationship, including in areas such as tourism, business, and overseas education programs.

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

Australia, as a partner working alongside Japan to realize FOIP, occupies an indispensable role in Japan's security, and bilateral defense cooperation has been elevated to a new dimension. Under the Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement, which entered into force in 2023, force interoperability has been strengthened, and the two countries have reinforced their joint engagement in maintaining peace and stability across the Indo-Pacific.

In September, the Eleventh Japan-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations ("2+2") were held, and Japan and Australia concurred on working unwaveringly to deepen Australia-Japan strategic and security cooperation in line with the Australia-Japan Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation (JDSC),⁽²⁸⁾ issued in 2022. Japan and Australia concurred on strengthening collective deterrence, enhancing interoperability and coordinating their national security policies more closely, including in cooperation with the U.S.. Security cooperation has also expanded into emerging domains, with both countries concurring on countering disinformation, collaboration in the field of strategic communication, and strengthening cooperation in the field of economic security, including through leveraging the Australia-Japan Economic Security Dialogue. In October at the Japan-Australia Summit Meeting, the two leaders affirmed that they would improve interoperability between Japan and Australia in the field of security and strengthen their collective deterrence, based on the direction set out in



Eleventh Japan-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations ("2+2") (September 5, Melbourne outskirts, Australia)

the 2022 "Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation." They also concurred to strengthen dialogue and cooperation in the fields of cyber and economic security.

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, as well as in building a free and fair economic order based on the rule of law. At the Japan-Australia Summit Meeting in October, the two leaders affirmed that they would further strengthen cooperation in the field of the economy, including the CPTPP.

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 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July, Foreign Minister Kamikawa expressed her willingness to cooperate with Australia in addressing common challenges, including economic growth, energy security, and decarbonization through the Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC) platform.

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 state and 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 Japan-Australia Political Exchange Program. Both Japan and Australia will continue to work on the

⁽²⁸⁾ 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.

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 destroyer HMAS *Hobart* from early to mid-May and the destroyer HMAS *Sydney* from early to mid-September to undertake surveillance operations in the adjacent ocean areas around Japan. By doing so, for the 11th and 12th times since 2018, Australia has engaged in surveillance operations against illicit maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers⁽²⁹⁾ with North Korean flagged vessels, which are prohibited by UN Security Council resolutions. Furthermore, from early to mid-February and from early to mid-November, Australia engaged in surveillance operations for the 13th and 14th times since 2018 by aircraft, using U.S. Forces Japan's 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 on issues facing the region and the international community. Following the results of the general election that was held in 2023, 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 June, Prime Minister Kishida held his first Japan-New Zealand Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, who was visiting Japan for the first time since assuming his office, and the two leaders concurred to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in a wide range of areas, including security and economics, to realize FOIP amid the increasingly challenging strategic environment in the Indo-Pacific region. They also welcomed the agreement in principle in the negotiations of a Japan-New Zealand Information Security Agreement to enhance information sharing between the two countries. Additionally, the two leaders exchanged their views on the situation in East Asia, including China and North Korea, as well as on the situation in Russia and Ukraine, and confirmed that they would work closely together to resolve these challenges. Furthermore, the two leaders also affirmed the importance of cooperation between the two countries in the Pacific Islands region and concurred to promote cooperation based on the needs of Pacific Island countries. In July, the Japan-Australia-New Zealand-ROK Leaders' Meeting (IP4) was held, and, under the recognition that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable, the four leaders affirmed that they would deepen communication and cooperation with European countries on issues in the Indo-Pacific region. In November, Foreign



Japan-New Zealand Summit Meeting (June 19, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

⁽²⁹⁾ 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.

Minister Iwaya held informal discussions with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Winston Peters of New Zealand, during which they shared the intention to reinforce their “Strategic Cooperation Partnership” and to deepen multilateral cooperation, including through the IP4 and the Five Eyes⁽³⁰⁾ countries.

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 June at the Japan-New Zealand Summit Meeting, the two leaders had a candid discussion on the CPTPP from a strategic perspective and concurred on the importance of working toward the development of the agreement, and shared the intention to strengthen cooperation in economic security, including addressing economic coercion and enhancing supply chain resilience.

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 2024. By 2024, more than 3,500 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, 44 sister-city relationships have been established between municipalities in the two countries.

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 and initiatives under the IP4 framework. In support of surveillance for illicit maritime activity, New Zealand deployed the Royal New Zealand Navy sustainment vessel HMNZS *Aotearoa* to the waters around Japan from mid-August to mid-September for its first naval surveillance operation targeting illicit maritime activities including prohibited ship-to-ship transfers involving North Korea-flagged vessels under UN Security Council resolutions. Furthermore, from mid-April to mid-May New Zealand engaged in surveillance operations for the sixth time since 2018 by aircraft, using Kadena Air Base.

(3) Pacific Island Countries⁽³¹⁾

A Brief Summary and Overview

The Pacific Island countries, surrounded by the vast and beautiful ocean, are rich in marine resources and nature. This region is divided into three subregions, Micronesia, Polynesia, and Melanesia, each with its own distinct characteristics. Many of these relatively young nations gained independence from colonial or trusteeship status following World War II, chiefly since the 1970s. At the same time, they face severe geographic and economic challenges: “insularity,” with territory scattered across small islands; “smallness,” with limited populations that preclude economies of scale; and “remoteness,” lying far from major international markets. Among these vulnerabilities, climate change poses “the single greatest existential threat” to the Pacific Island countries. In response to these shared challenges, since 1971 the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF; formerly the South Pacific Forum until 1999) has been developed as a forum for dialogue between the leaders of the Pacific Island countries and regions to advance regional cooperation across political, economic, security, and other domains.

The Pacific Island countries and Japan, bound by the Pacific Ocean, have deep historical ties, and are

⁽³⁰⁾ Refers to the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

⁽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

important partners in such areas of cooperation in the international arena, 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. In addition to bilateral cooperation, Japan is also promoting cooperation with the PIF. At its Leaders Meeting in 2022, the PIF announced the “2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent” (2050 Strategy), which outlines the ideal political, economic, and other conditions and strategic measures for Pacific Island countries and regions in 2050. Japan has consistently expressed strong support for the 2050 Strategy.

As the geopolitical importance of the Pacific Island region increases, cooperation among related countries both within and outside of the region is being strengthened, most notably through the Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP) framework established in 2022. At the May 2023 Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Leaders' Meeting, a “Quad Partnership for Cable Connectivity and Resilience” was announced. Then in April 2024, during the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting, new cooperation on subsea cable systems for Tuvalu and the Federated States of Micronesia was unveiled.

B Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM)

In addition to bilateral cooperation, one of Japan's principal diplomatic initiatives with Pacific Island countries is the Pacific Islands Leaders' Meeting (PALM). Since 1997, PALM has been held every three years to deepen ties with Pacific Island countries. In July 2024, Tokyo hosted the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders' Meeting (PALM10), where participants reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation with Pacific

Island countries and regions. (See the Opening Special Feature on page 4.)

Prior to PALM10, in February the 5th Ministerial Interim Meeting of the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting was held in Suva, Fiji, with Foreign Minister Kamikawa as co-chair. This was the first PALM Ministerial Interim Meeting held in a Pacific Island country. The meeting followed up on PALM9, which was held in 2021. PIF member countries and regions highly valued the progress where Japan steadily implemented its commitment in every priority area to promote cooperation with Pacific Island countries, and expressed their appreciation to the Government and people of Japan. A Chairs' Summary was adopted. Foreign Minister Kamikawa also took the opportunity to meet with participants from each country, working to strengthen bilateral relations.

At PALM10 in Tokyo in July, Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Mark Brown of the Cook Islands served as co-chairs, expressing strong support for the 2050 Strategy and discussing regional and international developments. They reaffirmed the deep *kizuna* (bonds) built over time and confirmed a relationship in which they would “stride forward together” toward the future, addressing shared challenges alongside Pacific Island countries and regions. The leaders adopted the “10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM 10) Leaders' Declaration” and the “10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM 10) Joint Action Plan,” and Japan announced its “Pacific Climate Resilience Initiative.” Regarding the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea, Prime Minister Kishida explained that, in close coordination with the IAEA, Japan would continue to share information to build confidence, a commitment that was welcomed by Pacific Island partners. In addition, Prime Minister Kishida held 17 bilateral summit meetings with Pacific Island leaders during the summit.

C Country-Specific Developments

(A) Kiribati

In August, Kiribati held presidential and parliamentary elections. On October 25, President Taneti Maamau was re-elected, and his inauguration took place on November 1.



Foreign Minister Kamikawa attending the 5th Ministerial Interim Meeting of the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM) (February 12, Suva, Fiji)

(B) Cook Islands

The Cook Islands served as Chair of the PIF from November 2023 to August 2024. Japan has endeavored to strengthen its relationship with the Cook Islands, including by inviting them to the 2023 Hiroshima G7 Summit Outreach Session. At PALM10 in July, Prime Minister Brown served as co-chair, and a Japan-Cook Islands Summit Meeting was held, where Prime Minister Kishida expressed his intention to cooperate in line with important issues for the Cook Islands, such as infrastructural resilience and climate change adaptation, while building on the achievements made so far.



Japan-Cook Islands Summit Meeting (July 17, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

(C) Samoa

In February, Foreign Minister Kamikawa became the first Japanese foreign minister to visit Samoa, where she paid courtesy calls on Head of State Tuimaleali'ifano Va'aletoa Sualauvi II and met with Prime Minister Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa. At PALM10 in July, a Japan-Samoa Summit Meeting was held, during which the two leaders discussed collaboration in the areas of climate change and disaster prevention, beginning with collaboration for the Pacific Climate Change Centre.

(D) Solomon Islands

In April, a general election was held following the expiration of Prime Minister Manasseh Damukana Sogavare's term, and Prime Minister Jeremiah Manele took office. In June, ISHIIHARA Hirotaka, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister, visited Solomon Islands as a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan, and met with Prime Minister Manele and others. At PALM10 in July, a Japan-Solomon Islands Summit Meeting was held, and Prime Minister Kishida stated

that Japan would cooperate with Solomon Islands based on a relationship of trust.

(E) Tuvalu

In April, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Komura visited Tuvalu as a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan, and paid a courtesy call on and held talks with Prime Minister Feleti Penitala Teo and others. At PALM10 in July, a Japan-Tuvalu Summit Meeting was held, and Prime Minister Kishida expressed his respect for Tuvalu's efforts to raise awareness of the climate change crisis and mobilize the international community. In December, a ceremony was held to commemorate the landing of Tuvalu's first sub-sea cable, a donor-funded project involving Japan, the U.S., Australia, and other like-minded partners.

(F) Tonga

In March, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala visited Japan to attend the 2nd Japan Pacific Islands Defense Dialogue, where he held informal discussions with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge. In May, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge visited Tonga as a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan and met with the Crown Prince. At PALM10 in July, a Japan-Tonga Summit Meeting took place, during which Prime Minister Kishida welcomed progress on Tonga's recovery from the 2022 volcanic eruption and advancements in defense cooperation. In August, as Chair of the PIF, Tonga hosted the Forum Leaders Meeting in Nuku'alofa. Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Komura attended as a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan, highlighting PALM10's achievements and reaffirming Japan's commitment to listen to and address the needs of Pacific Island countries.

(G) Nauru

In May, Special Adviser to the Prime Minister Ishihara visited Nauru as a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan, where he paid a courtesy call on President David Adeang and held meetings. At PALM10 in July, a Japan-Nauru Summit Meeting was held, during which Prime Minister Kishida conveyed the decision to provide a patrol vessel to improve Nauru's capacity of controlling illegal fishing.

(H) Niue

In October, Niue marked the 50th anniversary of its constitution and achievement of self-governance. At PALM10 in July, a Japan-Niue Summit Meeting took place, where Prime Minister Kishida affirmed Japan's strong support for Niue as it addresses multiple challenges. Niue's first honorary consulate in Japan was opened in Tokyo in the same month.

(I) Vanuatu

In June, Member of the House of Councillors MATSUYAMA Masaji visited Vanuatu as a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan, where he paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas and held meetings. At PALM10 in July, a Japan-Vanuatu Summit Meeting took place, during which Prime Minister Kishida expressed Japan's intent to contribute promoting fishing industry as well as addressing priority issues in Vanuatu.

(J) Papua New Guinea

Between April and May, landslides occurred in the Province of Enga, and Prime Minister Kishida and Foreign Minister Kamikawa expressed their condolences. Through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japan provided emergency relief supplies and decided to extend grant aid via UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration. In May, Special Adviser to the Prime Minister Ishihara visited Papua New Guinea as a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan, where he paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister James Marape and held meetings. At PALM10 in July, a Japan-Papua New Guinea Summit Meeting was held, at which Prime Minister Kishida expressed Japan's intention to strengthen bilateral relations ahead of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties in 2025.

(K) Palau

In 2024, marking the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Palau, bilateral ties were further strengthened through a variety of exchanges. In 2024, Japan-Palau Summit Meetings were held on three occasions: in June when President Surangel S. Whipps, Jr. visited Japan, in July when President Whipps came to Japan to attend

PALM10, and in September during the UN General Assembly, for a total of five summit meetings with Prime Minister Kishida during the first four years of President Whipps' term. In January, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held her first Japan-Palau Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Minister of State Gustav Aitaro during his visit to Japan, where both ministers confirmed that they would cooperate for regional peace and stability on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Palau (See the Column on page 87.), and in February they also met again for another Japan-Palau Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Fiji. In May, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Komura visited Palau as a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan, where he paid a courtesy call on President Whipps and held meetings. In October, TAKATA Toshihisa, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan and formerly Japan's Ambassador for Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting, represented Japan at the 30th anniversary of Palau's independence ceremony. In November, presidential elections were held, and President Whipps was re-elected to a second term.

(L) Fiji

In February, the 5th Ministerial Interim Meeting of the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM) was held in Fiji, where Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited and served as co-chair. In April, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Komura visited Fiji as a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan. At PALM10 in July, a Japan-Fiji Summit Meeting took place. Prime Minister Kishida emphasized the importance of cooperation with Fiji, a key player in the region, and discussed support for building disaster prevention systems, sports exchanges such as in rugby, and expressed his deep appreciation for Fiji's confidence in the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea.

(M) Marshall Islands

In January, following the results of the general election held at the end of 2023, President Hilda Heine was elected by the Nitijela (legislature) and inaugurated. Member of the House of Representatives TANAKA Kazunori visited the Marshall Islands as a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan to attend the inauguration ceremony. In February, Foreign Minister

COLUMN

The 30th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Palau

2024 marked the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Palau. Since Palau gained independence from the United States in October 1994 and formal diplomatic relations with Japan were established in November of the same year, the two countries' *"kizuna"* (bonds) and *"tokubetsu"* (special) relationship have grown ever stronger.

The historical relationship between Japan and Palau dates back to before the two countries established diplomatic relations. After World War I, Japan administered Micronesia (the South Sea Islands), including Palau, under a mandate for about 30 years. In 1922, the South Seas Agency was established in Koror, marking the start of full-scale governance. At its peak, it is said that more than 25,000 Japanese people lived in Palau. Due to this historical relationship, about 25% of Palau's population is of Japanese descendants, including Palau's first President Nakamura. Thanks to the prominent performance of Japanese descendants in Palau, the people of Palau have a great affinity for Japan, and in terms of language, many Japanese terms, such as *"tokubetsu"* and *"daijoubu"* (all right / okay / fine) have been adopted into the local language. The deep historical and cultural ties between the two countries support the current good relationship.

Japan is also an essential donor country for Palau, and has cooperated for many years to promote Palau's economic development, mainly in the areas of the environment and climate change. The Japan-Palau Friendship Bridge, which opened in 2002 and connects Koror Island and Babeldaob Island, is a symbol of the friendly relationship between the two countries.



Japan-Palau Summit Meeting (September 23, New York, U.S.; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

The year 2024 marked the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Palau, and there were numerous opportunities for high-level visits between the two countries. Prime Minister Kishida and President Surangel S. Whippis held three summit meetings: during President Whippis' visit to Japan in June, during the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM10) in July, and during the 79th United Nations General Assembly in September, and at these meetings the two leaders had candid exchanges grounded in their personal relationship of trust. TAKATA Toshihisa, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan (former advisor of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and formerly Japan's Ambassador for PALM), attended the opening ceremony

celebrating the 30th anniversary of Palau's independence on October 1, paid a courtesy call on President Whippis, and delivered a congratulatory speech on the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Palau.

People-to-people exchanges between the two countries are taking place at the grassroots level, and visits by local governments and student exchanges are also actively being conducted. It is expected that people-to-people exchanges between the two countries will further expand through measures such as the planned chartered flights operating from March 2025 that were announced at the Japan-Palau Summit Meeting in July.

The relationship between Japan and Palau has been strengthened by these historical and cultural ties, as well as people-to-people exchanges at various levels. 2024 was a year to reaffirm the *"kizuna"* and *"tokubetsu"* relationship between the two countries, with the aim of further developing the relationship in the future.



The Logo for the "30th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Palau"

Kamikawa had a Japan-Marshall Islands Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Foreign Minister Kalani Kaneko in Fiji; in March, Prime Minister Kishida held a Japan-Marshall Islands Summit Meeting with President Heine during her visit to Japan. At PALM10 in July, a Japan-Marshall Islands Summit Meeting was held, where Prime Minister Kishida conveyed the decision to conduct the detailed design for the reconstruction of the passenger terminal of the Amata Kabua International Airport and expressed the hope that these efforts will contribute to the Marshall Islands' sustainable development.

(N) Federated States of Micronesia

In February, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a Japan-Federated States of Micronesia Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Foreign Minister Lorin S. Robert in Fiji. In May, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Komura visited the Federated States of Micronesia as a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan, where he paid a courtesy call on President Wesley W. Simina and held meetings. At PALM10 in July, a Japan-Federate States of Micronesia Summit Meeting was held, during which Prime Minister Kishida announced Japan's decision to assist in strengthening connectivity by constructing a new wharf at Pohnpei Port.

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, while maintaining the Japan-U.S. Alliance as the cornerstone of its foreign policy, Japan strategically advances initiatives toward realizing a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" through various regional cooperative frameworks such as Japan-ASEAN, Japan-Mekong cooperation, ASEAN Plus Three (Japan, China and the ROK), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and through cooperation with like-minded countries such as Australia, India, ASEAN Member States, and Europe.

In particular, Japan has consistently supported the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP),"⁽³²⁾ which ASEAN formulated in 2019. AOIP shares fundamental principles with FOIP, including openness, transparency, inclusivity, and respect for international law, and Japan has been assisting its mainstreaming. Japan intends to continue respecting ASEAN centrality and unity and contribute to the stability and prosperity of the entire Indo-Pacific region by implementing

concrete cooperation that contributes to the principles espoused by FOIP and AOIP.

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

Located at a geopolitical strategic point in the center of the Indo-Pacific, ASEAN is key to the realization of FOIP. While Southeast Asia has been an important production base for Japanese companies, particularly in the manufacturing industry, and recently, has been attracting attention as a vibrant growth center for the global economy and as a growing consumer market. ASEAN also plays an important role in regional cooperation, and, through multilayered frameworks such as ASEAN+3 (Japan, China, and the ROK), EAS, and ARF, cooperation is progressing in a wide range of fields, including politics, security, economy, and society and culture.

In 2015, the establishment of the ASEAN Community was declared, and the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 was adopted, outlining the direction of the ASEAN Community for the 10 years from 2016. In 2019, the AOIP, which is a guideline for ASEAN's engagement in the Indo-Pacific region, was adopted.

⁽³²⁾ AOIP: ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific

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.

On the economic front, ASEAN established the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and has concluded EPAs and FTAs with countries such as Japan, China, the ROK, and India. Moreover, an ASEAN centered free trade area is expanding, with ASEAN member states signing the RCEP Agreement with Japan, China, the ROK, Australia and New Zealand.

(2) Issue of the South China Sea

In the South China Sea, amidst disputes over territorial sovereignty, China has been continuing and intensifying its unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force and its actions that increase regional tensions, such as further militarization of disputed features (See Chapter 3, Section 1, 3 (4) d) and coercive and threatening actions against coastal countries and other countries, which is against the rule of law and openness. Moreover, China has been refusing to accept the Arbitral Tribunal's award⁽³³⁾ 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 2024, the Government of the Philippines issued multiple statements condemning the actions of Chinese vessels against Philippine-flagged ships as in 2023, following the collisions between Chinese and Filipino vessels and other incidents. The Government of Viet Nam also released a statement condemning the actions of Chinese vessels against crewmembers of a Vietnamese fishing boat were injured in the Paracel Islands.

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 imports most of its resources and energy through marine transport. The international community, including Japan, have expressed serious concern against China's unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force and other actions that increase regional tensions.

Japan strongly opposes unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force and any actions that increase

tensions, and, 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) on page 253.), Japan has also consistently emphasized the importance of all the concerned parties related to the South China Sea to work toward peaceful resolution of disputes based on international law, in particular UNCLOS. Moreover, Japan has also repeatedly pointed out that China's assertions in the South China Sea are not based on relevant provisions of UNCLOS; that it is important to protect the freedom of navigation and overflight in all maritime and airspace in the South China Sea; that the Arbitral Tribunal's award, which determined that China's claim of "historical rights" based on the "nine-dash line," which has no clear basis in international law, violates UNCLOS, is final and legally binding on the parties to the dispute; and that it expects that the parties comply with the award and resolve the dispute peacefully. Since 2021, which marked the fifth anniversary of the Arbitral Tribunal's award as to the disputes between the Philippines and China, Japan has been issuing statements by the Foreign Minister every year, and has been repeatedly expressing Japan's position, including the importance of the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law and the importance of the rule of law.

Cooperation among allies and like-minded countries is also important to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law. In April, Prime Minister Kishida attended the Japan-U.S.-Philippines Summit in the U.S., held for the first time, with U.S. President Biden and Philippine President Marcos. The three leaders concurred on further strengthening cooperation among Japan, the U.S. and the Philippines, and to advance embodying the cooperation among the three countries, with the severe strategic environment, including the situation in the South China Sea in mind. Following the announcement of the establishment at the Japan-U.S.-Philippines Summit, the Japan-U.S.-Philippines Maritime Dialogue was held in December, where the

⁽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."

participants exchanged views on the situation in the South China Sea, and reaffirmed their opposition to unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force.

Furthermore, with regard to the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC), which has been under discussion for many years between China and ASEAN, Japan has stated its position that it should be effective, substantive, consistent with international laws including UNCLOS, and respect the legitimate rights and interests of all stakeholders who use 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 based on "ASEAN Community Vision 2025" for further integration even after the 2015 establishment of the ASEAN Community.

Currently, cooperation is progressing in a wide range of areas under the three pillars based on the "Joint Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation" and its concrete "Implementation Plan," which were adopted at the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation held in December 2023: (a) connecting to the next generation and strengthening the long-standing relationship of trust as "Heart-to-Heart Partners across Generations," (b) finding solutions to common challenges as "Partners for Co-Creation of Economy and Society of the Future," and (c) promoting FOIP as "Partners for Peace and Stability."

Moreover, regarding AOIP, Japan has been building up concrete cooperation in line with four priority areas of cooperation of AOIP, namely maritime cooperation, connectivity, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and economy, based on the "Joint Statement of the 23rd ASEAN-Japan Summit on Cooperation on ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific" adopted in 2020.

At the ASEAN-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July, Foreign Minister Kamikawa pointed out that broad cooperation is steadily progressing in line with the three pillars of the Joint Vision Statement announced at the Commemorative Summit, referring

to the (a) dispatch of "NIHONGO Partners" under the "Partnership to Co-create a Future with the Next Generation: WA Project 2.0," (b) support for enhancing ASEAN connectivity under the "Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Connectivity Initiative," and (c) security cooperation and maritime cooperation. The Foreign Ministers of ASEAN Member States expressed high appreciation for the Commemorative Summit and welcomed the steady progress of concrete cooperation in line with the Implementation Plan of the Joint Vision Statement. Moreover, Foreign Minister Kamikawa explained Japan's position regarding regional and international situations, that any unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force is unacceptable anywhere in the world from the perspective of emphasizing the importance of the international order based on the rule of law, and that Japan will continue to support ASEAN's centrality and unity.

At the ASEAN Japan Summit in October, Prime Minister Ishiba expressed his strong determination to further strengthen the relationship as "Trusted Partners" with "heart to heart" connections, which Japan and ASEAN have built over half a century. He also explained that cooperation on the three pillars is progressing steadily, and stated that Japan will promote cooperation to address emerging issues such as Green Transformation (GX) and Digital Transformation (DX) in order to jointly shape a vibrant future of the region. ASEAN countries expressed high expectations for deepening cooperation with Japan, including in new areas such as DX and GX. Regarding regional and international situations, Prime Minister Ishiba stated that Japan will work with ASEAN to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law, and explained Japan's position on the East China Sea, South China Sea, Taiwan, North Korea, the situation in Myanmar, Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and the situation in the Middle East. ASEAN countries mentioned that unilateral actions in the East and South China Seas are undermining the stability in the region, and mentioned the importance of peaceful settlements of disputes based on UNCLOS. The ASEAN countries also mentioned the importance of implementation of UN Security Council resolutions by North Korea, the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and the resolution of humanitarian issues

including the abductions issue. They also expressed appreciation for Japan's support for the "Five Point Consensus" on Myanmar and mentioned the importance of a peaceful resolution to the situation in the Middle East.

(4) Japan-Mekong Cooperation

The Mekong region (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam) is Japan's strategic partner with promising future 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.

In July, the first Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting in three years was held in Laos, and the Japan-Mekong Cooperation Strategy 2024 was adopted, which is based on three pillars: (a) Resilient and connected society in the post-COVID-19 world, (b) Digitalization, and (c) Proactive response to non-traditional security issues. Foreign Minister Kamikawa, who served as co-chair of the meeting, stated that Japan will continue to work on enhancing connectivity in various fields, both hard and soft, and will cooperate in various fields with the promising Mekong countries as "Partners for Co-creation of Economy and Society of the Future." Going forward, Japan will continue to contribute to the prosperity and development of the region through the implementation of Japan-Mekong cooperation projects based on the strategy.

(5) ASEAN Plus Three

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)."



Prime Minister Ishiba attending the 27th ASEAN Plus Three (Japan-China-ROK) Summit (October 10, Vientiane, Laos; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

At the ASEAN Plus Three Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in July, Foreign Minister Kamikawa stressed the importance of maintaining and reinforcing the free and open international order based on the rule of law in order for the region to remain the center of stable economic growth in the Indo-Pacific region and the world. Moreover, Minister Kamikawa welcomed the agreement on the establishment of a "Rapid Financing Facility" to further strengthen the functions of the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation (CMIM)⁽³⁴⁾ as a concrete example of cooperation within ASEAN+3, regarding economic and financial cooperation. On cooperation toward a sustainable society, Minister Kamikawa spoke on Japan's continued support through the ASEAN+3 Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR) and full support for the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED). On cooperation regarding peace and security, Minister Kamikawa showed her willingness to press forward with cooperation on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), underlining the importance of women's participation and leadership in disaster response, disaster prevention and mitigation. With regard to regional and international situations, Minister Kamikawa explained Japan's position on North Korea, including its nuclear and missile issues and the abductions issue, as well as the situation in Myanmar.

At the ASEAN Plus Three Summit in October, Prime Minister Ishiba pointed out that the total GDP of Japan, China, the ROK and ASEAN accounts for

⁽³⁴⁾ The Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation (CMIM) is a framework agreed upon at the 2nd ASEAN+3 Finance Ministers' Meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in May 2000, in response to the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis with the aim of preventing a recurrence of currency crises within East Asia. To forestall regional financial contagion and escalation, the CMIM enables member countries facing difficulties in meeting foreign-currency payments to obtain short-term U.S. dollar liquidity through currency swaps in exchange for local currency.

more than 25% of the world's total GDP, indicating that there is great potential for ASEAN+3 cooperation; stated that Japan has led the establishment of the rapid Financing Facility under the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization that had been concurred on; noted that Japan has been playing a leading role in the ASEAN+3 Emergency Rice Reserve; remarked that Japan will dispatch Japanese experts to the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management; and stated Japan's commitment to further promote ASEAN+3 cooperation and to work together with the ASEAN+3 countries to shape and safeguard the future. Furthermore, with regard to the regional and international issues, Prime Minister Ishiba emphasized that maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law is essential for the stability and prosperity of the region, and explained Japan's position on North Korea, including the nuclear and missile issues as well as the abductions issue.

(6) East Asia Summit (EAS)

EAS was established in 2005 with the aim of implementing strategic dialogue and cooperation on common concern to the region, regarding political, security, and economic issues. As the Leaders-led premier forum in the region, EAS is expected to 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 Kamikawa stated that it is important to comply with basic principles of the UN Charter such as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to strive for the world where a free and open international order based on the rule of law is maintained and strengthened, and human dignity is protected. Minister Kamikawa also emphasized that any unilateral attempts to change the status quo cannot be tolerated, whether in the seas surrounding Japan, such as the East China Sea, or anywhere else in the world, that fundamental human rights, freedoms and democracy in the region must be protected and promoted, and that economic coercion must be opposed. Moreover, Minister Kamikawa explained Japan's positions on the situation in the South China Sea, the Taiwan Strait, North Korea including the nuclear and missile issues



Foreign Minister Kamikawa attending the 14th East Asia Summit (EAS) Foreign Ministers' Meeting (July 27, Vientiane, Laos)

and the abductions issue, Myanmar, Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the situation in the Middle East, and ALPS treated water.

At the 19th East Asia Summit held in October, Prime Minister Ishiba pointed out the principles of the UN Charter, such as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes based on international law, and prohibition of the use of force, are becoming increasingly important in today's turbulent international situation. Prime Minister Ishiba stated that any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion anywhere in the world must not be tolerated, that it is essential to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law, and that Japan supports ASEAN centrality and unity, advocates AOIP, and will continue to actively support promotion and mainstreaming of the initiative. Regarding the regional and international situation, Prime Minister Ishiba expressed serious concerns about the advancement of North Korea's nuclear and missile activities as well as military cooperation with Russia, and pointed out that peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula are in the common interest of all and that a robust response of the international community toward the complete denuclearization of North Korea is critical. Prime Minister Ishiba called for the continued understanding and cooperation from EAS participating countries toward the immediate resolution of the abductions issue. Moreover, Prime Minister Ishiba stated that Japan strongly opposes continuing and intensifying activities that infringe upon Japan's sovereignty in the East China Sea, expressed serious concerns about militarization and coercive activities

that are continuing and intensifying in the South China Sea, and stated that any claims of maritime interests and activities must be based on the relevant provisions of UNCLOS. Prime Minister Ishiba also stated the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. Regarding the relationship between Japan and China, Prime Minister Ishiba stated that both countries bear great responsibilities for the peace and prosperity of the international community, including the Southeast Asian region, and that Japan will continue to maintain close communication with China at all levels. While expressing serious concerns regarding the situation in Myanmar and calling for improvement of the situation, Prime Minister Ishiba stated that Japan will continue to offer maximum support to ASEAN's efforts including the implementation of the "Five-Point Consensus" and provide humanitarian assistance. Regarding Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Prime Minister Ishiba pointed out that it is a blatant breach of international law, and emphasized that it is necessary to realize a just and lasting peace as soon as possible. As for the situation in the Middle East, Prime Minister Ishiba called on all parties concerned to exercise the utmost restraint, and stated that Japan would like to work together to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza as an urgent issue.

(7) Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Cooperation

Japan, China and the ROK share geographical proximity and deep historical ties, play a major role in the global economy, and are a driving force of the prosperity of the East Asian region. There is great potential for the three countries, which share a significant responsibility for peace and prosperity of the region, to promote exchanges and mutual understanding and cooperate to address various challenges in the international community.

On May 27, the Japan-China-ROK Summit was held in Seoul, ROK, for the first time in about four and a half years. At this summit, the three leaders commemorated the 25th anniversary of the trilateral cooperation, welcomed the trilateral process being revitalized, and concurred on promoting future-oriented practical cooperation.

The three leaders also exchanged views on regional and international situations, including the situation in



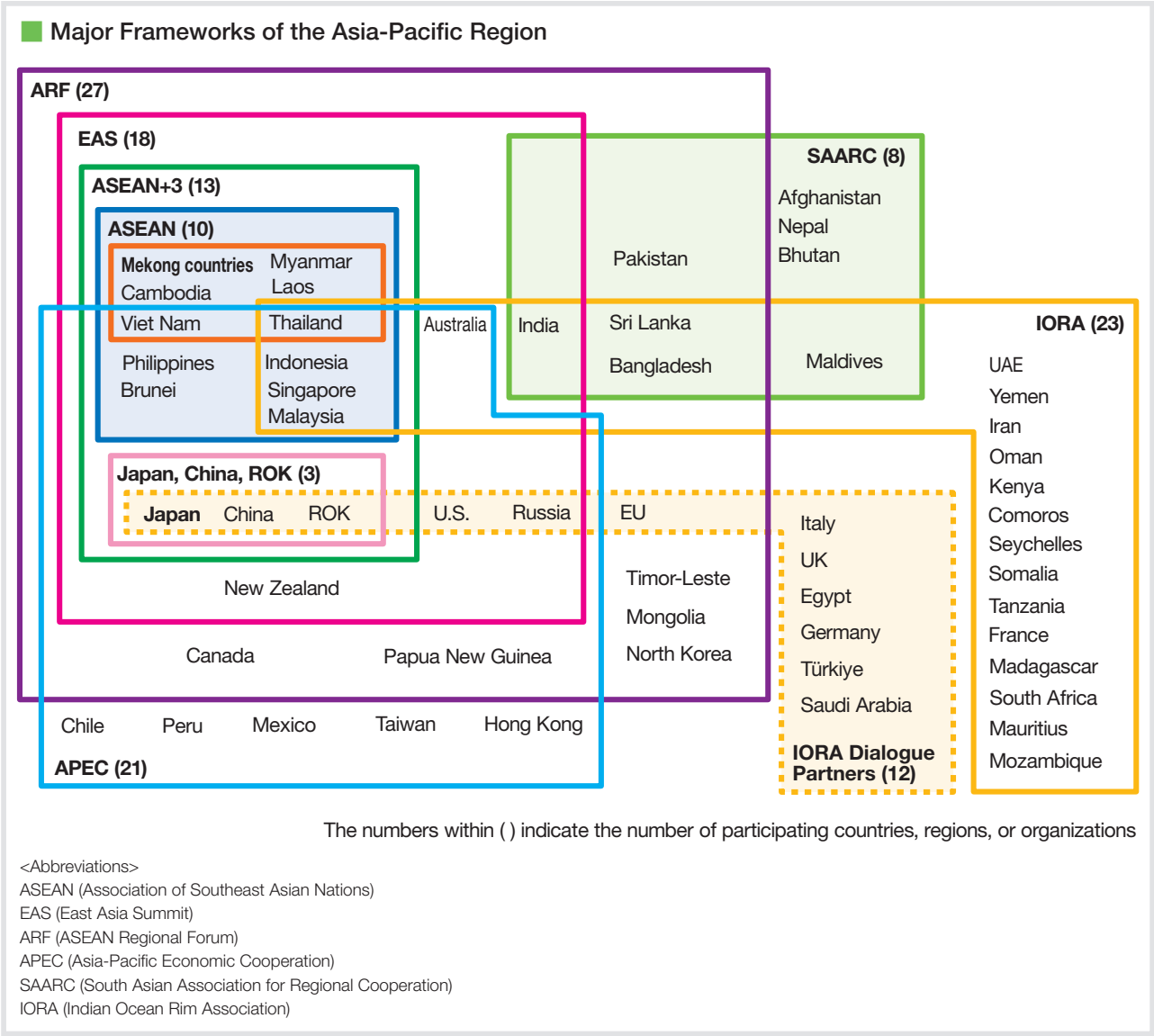
Prime Minister Kishida attending the Ninth Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit (May 27, Seoul, ROK; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

North Korea, Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the situation in the Middle East. Regarding the situation in North Korea, Prime Minister Kishida expressed serious concerns over North Korea's nuclear and missile activities and development of military cooperation between Russia and North Korea, and reconfirmed that the denuclearization of North Korea and stability on the Korean Peninsula are the common interest of the three countries. He also stated that the three countries should urge North Korea to completely dismantle its nuclear and ballistic missile programs in accordance with relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. Moreover, Prime Minister Kishida asked for continued support of the leaders of the ROK and China for the immediate resolution of the abductions issue, and gained their understanding.

(8) Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) (See Chapter 3, Section 3, 3 (3) on page 300)

Consisting of 21 economies (countries and regions) in the Asia-Pacific region, APEC is an economic cooperation framework in achieving sustainable growth and prosperity in the region. Promoting economic cooperation and strengthening trust in the Asia-Pacific region, which is positioned as the "world's growth center," is extremely important for Japan's further economic development.

At the APEC Leaders' Meeting held in Lima, Peru in November, the "2024 APEC Leaders' Machu Picchu Declaration" was adopted, and a Chair's Statement on the situation in Ukraine and the Middle East was released. Prime Minister Ishiba, who attended the



meeting, stressed the importance of maintaining and strengthening a free and open trade and investment environment, as well as the multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core.

(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 2024, 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 8,921 people as of the end of 2024.

(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.

Section 3

North America

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 due to factors such as the escalation of tensions in the Middle East 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 those of intercontinental ballistic missile (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.

<Foreign Policies of the U.S. and Canada>

In 2022, under the Biden administration, the U.S. announced its Indo-Pacific Strategy and National Security Strategy, which outline its commitment to

tackling various challenges facing the international community in cooperation with allies and like-minded countries, including Japan. Based on this strategy, the U.S. has been proactive in its diplomatic activities, holding summits with the G7, Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad), Japan-U.S.-Republic of Korea (ROK), Japan-U.S.-Philippines, and Japan-U.S.-Australia-Philippines, and emphasizing multilateral cooperation.

With an eye toward serving as the G7 Presidency in 2025, Canada placed importance on strengthening cooperation with like-minded countries, especially the G7 countries. Following the announcement of the Indo-Pacific Strategy in 2022, Canada continued to demonstrate a diplomatic stance that emphasized the Indo-Pacific region and the Arctic in its revised National Defense Policy in April 2024, and its Arctic Foreign Policy announced in December of that year. Specifically, throughout the year, Canada worked with like-minded countries in the Indo-Pacific region, including Japan, to combat ship-to-ship transfers,⁽¹⁾ monitor illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, and conduct joint training with other countries. Regarding the Arctic, Canada issued a joint statement in July with the U.S. and Finland on cooperation in building icebreakers. Furthermore, the Arctic Foreign Policy announced in December clearly stated Canada's intention to strengthen cooperation with non-Arctic countries, including Japan.

In the economic field, as the chair of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) in 2024, Canada took the lead in maintaining and strengthening a free and fair economic order in the Indo-Pacific.

⁽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 UN member states from facilitating or engaging in.

<Japan's Diplomatic Relations with North America>

Against this backdrop, 2024 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. Japan and the U.S. were in constant communication and cooperating at all levels, including holding five summit meetings (including one telephone call) and six foreign ministers' meetings (including one telephone call) between January 2024 and the end of February 2025, in an effort to maintain peace and stability in the region and the international community. In April, Prime Minister Kishida was the first Japanese Prime Minister in nine years to pay an Official Visit with State Dinner to the U.S. The visit deepened the personal relationship of trust between the two leaders and confirmed that Japan and the U.S. are bound by deep trust and multilayered friendship, and that they are not just bilateral or regional, but are global partners that work together to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law. At the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting in September and the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting between Prime Minister Ishiba and President Joseph Biden in

November, the two countries concurred on continuing to work closely together to maintain and strengthen Japan-U.S. relations, which have become stronger than ever. In February 2025, Prime Minister Ishiba visited the U.S. for the first Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting with President Donald J. Trump, where the two leaders confirmed that they would cooperate closely to realize a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" and elevate the Japan-U.S. Alliance to new heights.

On the other hand, between January 2024 and the end of January 2025, Japan and Canada held three summit meetings and four foreign ministerial meetings (including one telephone call). At the meetings, the two countries confirmed that they would steadily implement the "Canada-Japan Action Plan for contributing to a free and open Indo-Pacific" jointly announced in 2022, and that Japan and Canada will continue to cooperate toward realizing FOIP. Cooperation based on the Action Plan has progressed steadily in areas such as security and the rule of law, including cooperation in the Japan-Canada Bilateral Exercise (KADEX24) and surveillance activities of IUU fishing. Furthermore, Japan-Canada relations have been further strengthened through the promotion of a wide range of diplomatic initiatives, including the G7 and CPTPP.

2 United States

(1) U.S. Domestic Situation

A Politics

U.S. domestic politics in 2024 revolved around the November presidential election. The presidential primaries took place from mid-January to early June, with President Biden and former President Trump each seeking re-election. By mid-March, both candidates secured enough delegates for nomination as their respective parties' presidential candidates, meaning they were competing as their parties' de facto presidential candidates without waiting for the formal nomination at the national party conventions. However, following the presidential debate televised in June, calls for the replacement of the candidate grew within the Democratic Party. Following his withdrawal from the election campaign in July, President Biden was

replaced by Vice President Kamala Harris as the presidential candidate. Former President Trump won the November presidential election, and as President-elect, soon began nominating cabinet members and senior officials for his second term.

(A) Presidential Primaries

The presidential primaries began on January 15 with the Iowa caucuses. There was no presidential debate held in the Democratic Party because there was no major candidate to challenge President Biden, and the presidential primary election mainly focused on his advanced age and policies. In terms of policy, one of the factors holding back President Biden's approval rating was the pressure on the national livelihoods caused by high prices, as well as criticism from part of the party's base

over the administration's response to the worsening situation in Gaza since the previous year. Particularly, with regard to the situation in Gaza, residents of Michigan, where about 2% of the state's population is Arab or Muslim, and some left-wing political activists, launched a campaign to force President Biden to revise the administration's Middle East policy by casting protest votes in the Democratic presidential primaries election. These protest votes accounted for more than 10% of the total votes cast in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. This campaign posed a threat that could derail President Biden's reelection, especially in battleground states where a small margin of votes could change the result.

Meanwhile, in the Republican primaries, former President Trump, who had announced his candidacy in November 2022, former UN Ambassador and former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, former Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson, and entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy ran in the election. However, former President Trump, who had an overwhelming advantage in terms of name recognition and approval ratings, did not participate in a single televised Republican presidential debate, and the primaries began without a direct debate between him and any other candidate. Given the results of the Iowa caucuses — the first primary — all candidates except former President Trump and Nikki Haley withdrew from the race. After the contest became a two-way race, Haley became the sole candidate for the anti-Trump faction within the Republican Party and some independent voters, creating a showdown between Trump supporters and anti-Trump factions. However, on March 5, Super Tuesday, when primaries were held in 15 states, including California, former President Trump won by a landslide. Following these results, former Ambassador Haley withdrew the next day, making former President Trump the *de facto* Republican presidential nominee.

On March 12, President Biden and former President Trump respectively won enough delegates for presidential candidate nominations, diminishing the public attention on the primaries. The presidential primary process highlighted the core issues surrounding both candidates in the November presidential election. With respect to President Biden, it became clear that his

support for abortion rights following the 2022 ruling in the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* case (the *Dobbs* ruling) could work to his advantage, while his advanced age, his track record of economic policies particularly on high prices, and his response to the worsening situation in Gaza could work against him. On the other hand, it became clear that the issues of illegal immigration and the Southern border were in former President Trump's favor, while the anti-Trump faction within the Republican Party base and the possible outcome of the four criminal trials could work against him. In addition, civil lawsuits imposed large legal fees on him, putting a strain on his political war chest.

(B) Replacement of Democratic Party Presidential Candidate

As the primaries ended in early June and the November presidential election approached, President Biden's approval rating continued to trail former President Trump's since the beginning of the year both nationwide and in the seven presidential battleground states (Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Georgia, North Carolina, Arizona, and Nevada). At this point, there was already widespread anxiety within the Democratic Party about former President Trump's lead in the polls, but there was no move to call for any major changes to President Biden's candidacy.

However, during the month following the televised presidential debate, the political situation within the Democratic presidential campaign rapidly changed. During the debate with former President Trump on June 27, President Biden repeatedly stumbled and made speech errors. President Biden's performance in the debate led to an eruption of calls for the replacement of the party's presidential candidate among some Democratic lawmakers. About two weeks later, on July 13, former President Trump was shot while giving a speech during a rally in Pennsylvania. Although he was injured, he attended and gave a speech at the Republican National Convention held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin from July 15 to 18. The convention was held at a time when the Republican Party was more united and it buoyed the wounded former President Trump. The convention selected the then-39-year-old Senator J.D. Vance of Ohio as the party's vice-presidential

nominee. With the Republican Party gaining traction, the simmering anxiety and caution quickly surfaced and spread within the Democratic Party after the presidential debate, and calls for a replacement of the presidential candidate rapidly gained momentum. On July 21, President Biden announced his withdrawal from the presidential election. Immediately after his withdrawal, Vice President Harris secured intraparty support as an alternative presidential candidate and won the party's provisional nomination for the candidacy in an online internal vote. Subsequently, at the Democratic National Convention held in Chicago, Illinois from August 19 to 22, Vice President Harris was selected as the Democratic presidential candidate and Governor Tim Walz of Minnesota as the vice-presidential candidate.

With the replacement, public attention in the election campaign increasingly focused on Vice President Harris and former President Trump. As the first black female presidential candidate in U.S. history, Vice President Harris brought a freshness to the election and was able to dispel the issue of age. With less than three months until the November election, it was imperative for her to explain to voters the legitimacy of her becoming a presidential candidate without going through the primary election, and to differentiate herself from President Biden, whose approval rating was waning while she was serving as Vice President in his cabinet. By replacing the candidate, the Democratic Party succeeded in temporarily reversing the nationwide poor approval ratings of its presidential candidate that had persisted since the beginning of the year. However, the Democratic Party entered the November presidential election remaining unable to break former President Trump's lead on such salient issues clarified in the primary process as economic policies, particularly on high prices, illegal immigration and border measures, and response to the Gaza conflict. With respect to third-party candidates and third parties in the race, the new contest that emerged between Vice President Harris and former President Trump substantially diminished their presence, leading to the withdrawal of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. in late August and his later entry into the Trump camp.

(C) Presidential and Congressional Elections

On November 5, the presidential, congressional, and state gubernatorial elections were held across the U.S. Contrary to the predictions of many experts regarding possible turmoil arising from close races, except for some congressional elections, the results became known relatively quickly. Former President Trump won all seven battleground states and received 312 electoral college votes, far exceeding the majority of 270 needed to win. However, out of a total of approximately 152.3 million votes cast nationwide, the difference in votes won between former President Trump and Vice President Harris was only about 2.3 million votes (about 1.5%), making it an extremely close race. As in past elections, the basic electoral structure in which the election outcome is determined by just a few percent of voters, especially in battleground states, remained unchanged. In terms of voter trends, it was particularly noteworthy that 20% of black male voters — the majority of whom have traditionally been considered Democratic Party supporters — and 50% of Hispanic voters, voted for former President Trump.

The Republicans also won both chambers of Congress, gaining majorities in the Senate (53 seats) and the House of Representatives (220 seats).

Following the result of the presidential election, some pundits assessed that former President Trump had transformed the Republican Party from the party of the wealthy into the most multi-ethnic working-class party in recent decades, while the Democratic Party had transformed from the party of workers and the socially disadvantaged into a party supported by relatively wealthy, well-educated voters.

(D) Preparations for the Second Trump Administration

President-elect Trump finished nominating most of his cabinet members, including the Secretary of State within a month after the presidential election results were known, while keeping illegal immigration and border measures, security and drug measures, and economic measures as his priorities. Much attention was given to the appointments of Mr. Elon Musk, the wealthy businessperson who financially supported former President Trump during this election cycle, and

Mr. Vivek Ramaswami to the newly created role of head of the Department of Government Efficiency.

B Economy

(A) Current Economic Situation

Real GDP grew 2.9% year-on-year for all of 2023 and continued to grow at 2.8% year-on-year in 2024. From October to December, the economy grew at an annualized rate of 2.3% year-on-year, marking the 10th consecutive quarter of positive growth. Consumer spending, which accounts for about 70% of GDP, also led GDP growth at an annualized rate of 2.8% year-on-year. It is necessary to pay attention to the downside risk due to the impact of continuing high interest rates and the impact of future policy trends.

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 fell below 3% in July 2024 for the first time in approximately three years. Regarding the target policy interest rate, the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) had kept it at 5.25% to 5.50% for about a year since July 2023, but in September 2024, in response to the decline in the inflation rate, the FOMC lowered the target rate to between 4.75% and 5.00%, marking the first interest rate cut in about four and a half years. At the November FOMC meeting, the rate was further cut by 0.25 percentage points, to between 4.2% and 4.5%. In terms of employment, the unemployment rate remained low at around 4% throughout the year, as in 2023, and the number of workers employed also increased steadily.

(B) Major economic policies

Economic policy became one of the biggest issues in the presidential election. The U.S. economy was performing relatively well, with GDP maintaining growth for 11 consecutive quarters as of the fourth quarter of 2024 and the unemployment rate remaining low. However, economic disparities within the country have been widening year by year, and according to statistics from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, for the first half of 2024, household assets owned by the top 10% accounted for approximately 67% of all assets, while household assets owned by the bottom 50% accounted for only about 2.5% of the total. Only a small portion

of the population has benefited from the prosperous economy, including the long-term upward trend in stock prices in the U.S. market. With continuing inflation, public dissatisfaction with the current situation is considered to have had a certain influence on the election results.

Policy on China was pursued with bipartisan support amid growing attention to the divisions in American society and domestic politics. In April, the U.S. Congress passed a bill that would ban the use of apps including TikTok, managed by the Chinese company ByteDance, in the U.S. unless certain conditions were met. In May, the U.S. Government announced the results of a review of tariff measures on imports from China that have been implemented since 2018 based on domestic law (Section 301 of the Trade Act), and President Biden instructed the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) to raise the tariff rates on some tariffs imposed on China. Specifically, the Biden administration targeted increased tariffs on Chinese steel and aluminum, semiconductors, electric vehicles (EVs), batteries and critical minerals, solar cells, ship-to-shore cranes, and medical-related products, with a total value of 18 billion U.S. dollars (approximately 4% of the amount of annual U.S. imports from China). In June, the U.S. Treasury Department announced a proposal to restrict foreign investment in advanced technologies that could have a significant impact on national security, and to restrict investment in “countries of concern,” consisting of China, Hong Kong, and Macau. In September, the USTR proposed adding polysilicon and wafers, which are necessary for the production of solar cells and semiconductors, to the list of items subject to increased tariffs, and announced a final revised draft for the review of additional tariffs on China under Section 301 of the Trade Act, including provisions for partial exemptions for ship-to-shore cranes. In December, the U.S. Department of Commerce announced an interim final rule to make certain semiconductor manufacturing equipment subject to new export restrictions, as well as a final rule to add 140 companies to the Entity List in order to strengthen controls on semiconductor exports to China. In addition, that month, the USTR announced that it would launch an investigation into China's legacy semiconductors under Section 301 of the Trade Act.

At his inauguration ceremony in January 2025, President Trump stated that a corrupt ruling class was squeezing power and wealth from the people, and that he would take measures to combat inflation and lower prices, including the declaration of a national energy emergency and promoting fossil fuel production. Immediately after taking office, he signed a number of presidential executive orders in the field of the economy, including the “America First Trade Policy” memorandum which instructs relevant agencies to conduct investigations into unfair and unbalanced trade, economic and trade relations with China, and economic security, and to submit reports by April 1 that include recommendations for appropriate measures. President Trump also signed the “Unleashing American Energy” executive order which orders the temporary suspension of spending of funds allocated through the Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, purporting to abolish the Green New Deal policy.

(2) Japan-U.S. Political Relations

Between January 2024 and the end of February 2025, Japanese and U.S. leaders held a total of five meetings (including one telephone call) and six meetings between their foreign ministers (including one telephone call). In April, Prime Minister Kishida paid an Official Visit with State Dinner to the U.S., the first time in nine years that a Japanese prime minister had done so, and deepened his personal relationship of trust and ties with President Biden. Based on the deep trust between the leaders and foreign ministers, the Japan-U.S. Alliance is stronger than ever. The Japan-U.S. Alliance is the cornerstone of Japan's diplomacy and security and is the foundation for peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region and the international community. Japan and the U.S. are working closely together on all fronts, including regional affairs, security, the economy, global issues, and people-to-people exchanges, toward realizing a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” based on the rule of law.

Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Washington, D.C. on January 12 and held a Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The two Ministers exchanged views on regional situations, including the situation in the Indo-Pacific region, Russia's aggression in Ukraine, and the

situation in the Middle East, and shared the view to advance efforts to further strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance.

Prime Minister Kishida made an Official Visit with State Dinner to the U.S. from April 8 to 14, the first such visit by a Japanese prime minister in nine years.

Prime Minister Kishida visited Arlington National Cemetery on April 9 and laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Afterwards, at the invitation of President Biden and Dr. Jill Biden, the Prime Minister and Mrs. Kishida visited the White House and attended an informal dinner. The Prime Minister and Mrs. Kishida enjoyed a friendly exchange in a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere. They were given a tour of the White House by the President and Dr. Biden, who were then presented with a cherry blossom sapling that the Prime Minister and Mrs. Kishida had brought from Japan. The two leaders and their spouses posed for photographs with a model of a pressurized lunar rover being developed by the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) and Toyota Motor Corporation and confirmed their expectations for, and the importance of, Japan's contribution to the Artemis program. At the informal dinner that followed, the two leaders and their spouses deepened their rapport in a relaxed atmosphere and strengthened their personal bonds and trust.

On April 10, Prime Minister Kishida attended a welcoming ceremony held at the White House. President Biden stated that the Japan-U.S. Alliance is the cornerstone of the peace, security, and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and international society and that Japan and the U.S. are true global partners. President Biden also stated that Japan and the U.S. are the closest of friends. Prime Minister Kishida stated that Japan would lead the work on solving the challenges of the Indo-Pacific region and the world together with the U.S. as global partners. Prime Minister Kishida also touched upon the cherry blossoms on the Potomac River, the symbol of Japan-U.S. friendship, and noted that Japan had decided to give 250 cherry blossom trees to the U.S., commemorating the 250th anniversary of U.S. Independence.

That day, Prime Minister Kishida held a Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting with President Biden. Prime Minister Kishida stated that Japan and the U.S. are bonded by deep trust and multilayered friendship, and that based



Prime Minister Kishida explaining the gifts, including Wajima lacquerware, to the President and Dr. Biden (April 9, Washington, D.C., U.S.; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

on those bonds, Japan and the U.S. have become global partners beyond bilateral or regional spheres, to uphold and bolster the free and open international order based on the rule of law. The two leaders concurred on this point, and shared the recognition that division of the international society is deepening and it is facing an unprecedented level of challenges, and shared the view to jointly uphold and bolster the free and open international order based on the rule of law. As the role of the Japan-U.S. Alliance has become more significant than ever before, Prime Minister Kishida stated that, with a strong determination, he has been making efforts to reinforce Japan's defense capabilities in accordance with its National Security Strategy. In response, President Biden reiterated his strong support for the Prime Minister's initiatives. The two leaders reaffirmed the urgent need to further strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance and shared the view to expand and deepen security and defense cooperation. President Biden also reiterated the unwavering U.S. commitment to the defense of Japan.

The two leaders exchanged views on regional issues that included various issues related to China; responses to North Korea, including its nuclear and missile issues and the abductions issue; the situation in Ukraine; and other regional situations including the situation in the Middle East. The two leaders reaffirmed that unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion are totally unacceptable anywhere in the world and to resolutely respond to them, in coordination with allies and like-minded countries.

The two leaders concurred on further promoting cooperation between Japan and the U.S. in the area



Arrival ceremony at the White House (April 10, Washington, D.C., U.S.; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

of outer space. They welcomed the signing of a Lunar Surface Exploration Implementing Arrangement, which includes the provision of a pressurized lunar rover from Japan as well as the allocation of two astronaut flight opportunities to the lunar surface to Japan. Furthermore, the two leaders announced a shared goal for a Japanese national to be the first non-American astronaut to land on the Moon on a future Artemis mission, assuming important benchmarks are achieved.

The two leaders confirmed that realistic and practical efforts on nuclear disarmament are making progress, including the announcement of the "G7 Leaders' Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament" in the previous year. Prime Minister Kishida welcomed the U.S. participation in the Friends of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT)."

They reaffirmed that people-to-people ties are the foundation of unwavering bilateral relations between Japan and the U.S. and that it is important to further promote people-to-people exchanges to further strengthen the bilateral ties.

To manifest the unwavering determination to uphold and bolster the free and open international order based on the rule of law, which is the basis of global peace and prosperity, the two leaders issued a Japan-U.S. Joint Leaders' Statement "Global Partners for the Future" as a guideline of their determination.

On April 11, Prime Minister Kishida gave an address entitled "For the Future: Our Global Partnership" at a Joint Meeting of the U.S. Congress. The address was presided over by Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Mike Johnson, and was attended by many members of both chambers of the U.S.

Congress, including U.S. Vice President and President of the Senate Kamala Harris, members of the U.S. Congressional House and Senate Leadership, and people from various sectors of society. Prime Minister Kishida received warm applause and standing ovations from the floor. Prime Minister Kishida conveyed the message that Japan and the U.S. are, and will continue to be, global partners for the future, based on a solid alliance and enduring friendship.

On July 28, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Secretary of State Blinken, who was visiting Japan to attend the Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee ("2+2") and the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Foreign Ministers' Meeting. The two Ministers discussed responses to issues common to both countries including economic security and exchanged views on regional issues surrounding Japan, including the situation on the South China Sea. Both sides reaffirmed the importance of cooperation between the two countries, as well as the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

On September 21, Prime Minister Kishida, who was visiting Delaware, held a Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting at President Biden's private residence. At the beginning of the meeting, Prime Minister Kishida and President Biden walked together through the President's private residence, and President Biden introduced Prime Minister Kishida to the buildings and the lake surrounding the residence. The two leaders engaged in the meeting in a friendly atmosphere. The two leaders comprehensively reviewed the progress of Japan-U.S. relations and candidly exchanged their views on common issues that both countries share. Both leaders concurred on the importance of continuing to enhance the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance, and of steadily advancing bilateral security cooperation. Prime Minister Kishida emphasized that Japan and the U.S. should further promote FOIP through advancing their partnerships with like-minded countries, including the G7, Japan-Australia-India-U.S., Japan-U.S.-ROK, and Japan-U.S.-Philippines, and also stressed the need to advance such cooperation with the Global South.

The two leaders exchanged views on regional issues that included various issues related to China; responses



Prime Minister Kishida giving an address at a Joint Meeting of the U.S. Congress (April 10, Washington, D.C., U.S.; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)



Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting (July 28, Tokyo)

to North Korea, including its nuclear and missile issues and the abductions issue; the situation in Ukraine; and other regional situations including the situation in the Middle East. The two leaders shared the view to continue working closely together. Prime Minister Kishida emphasized the importance of continuing cooperation with the U.S. in leading efforts toward a world without nuclear weapons. At the end of the meeting, the two leaders confirmed that Japan and the U.S. continue to be global partners at the core of a free and open international order.

The Ishiba administration, which took office in October, has also positioned strengthening the Japan-U.S. Alliance as the administration's top priority in terms of foreign and security policy. On October 2, Prime Minister Ishiba had a telephone call with President Biden. Prime Minister Ishiba stated that he wants to continue working closely together with the U.S. as global partners at the core of a free and open international order, and both leaders concurred on the importance of continuing to enhance the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance. The two leaders also concurred on working together



Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting (September 21, Delaware, U.S.; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

on economic security cooperation, and on further developing networks of like-minded countries, including Japan-U.S.-ROK, Japan-Australia-India-U.S., and Japan-U.S.-Philippines. The two leaders shared the intention to continue working closely on issues related to China, dealing with North Korea including on the nuclear and missile issues as well as the abductions issue, and the situation in Ukraine.

On October 2, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone call with Secretary of State Blinken. Foreign Minister Iwaya stated that he would like to work closely together with Secretary Blinken to further deepen cooperation as global partners to uphold and bolster the free and open international order based on the rule of law, and to further strengthen the Japan-U.S. Alliance, which is stronger than ever. The two Ministers concurred to implement cooperation to further strengthen Japan-U.S. Alliance deterrence and response capabilities, building on the outcomes of the Japan-U.S. “2+2” in July, and to work closely together in the preservation and enhancement of the rules-based economic order in the Indo-Pacific region and economic security cooperation.

On November 7, Prime Minister Ishiba held a telephone call with President-elect Donald Trump. At the outset, Prime Minister Ishiba congratulated President-elect Trump on his victory in the presidential election. Both sides confirmed that they would work closely together to bring the Japan-U.S. Alliance to new heights, and also concurred on realizing a meeting in-person at the earliest possible opportunity that would be convenient for both sides.

On November 14, Foreign Minister Iwaya, who was visiting Lima, Peru to attend the APEC Ministerial

Meeting, held the first in-person foreign ministers’ meeting with Secretary of State Blinken. The two Ministers exchanged their views on regional situations such as issues related to China, policies toward North Korea including on the nuclear and missile issues as well as the abductions issue, and the situation in Ukraine. The two Ministers also concurred to implement cooperation to further strengthen Japan-U.S. Alliance deterrence and response capabilities, and further develop networks of like-minded countries.

On November 15, Prime Minister Ishiba, visiting Lima, Peru to attend the APEC Summit Meeting, held a meeting with President Biden. The two leaders concurred on continuing cooperating to strengthen the Japan-U.S. Alliance, and to further develop networks of like-minded countries, including Japan-U.S.-ROK. They also concurred on continuing working closely on policies toward the situation regarding North Korea including on the nuclear and missile issues as well as the abductions issue.

On January 7, 2025, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a working lunch with Secretary of State Blinken, who was visiting Japan. Foreign Minister Iwaya expressed his gratitude to Secretary Blinken for his contribution to the Japan-U.S. Alliance, and the two Ministers concurred on continuing working closely together to further uphold and bolster the Japan-U.S. relationship, which has become stronger than ever.

On January 20, Foreign Minister Iwaya visited Washington, D.C. to attend President Trump’s inauguration ceremony at the invitation of the U.S.

On January 21, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a foreign ministers’ meeting with Secretary of State Marco Rubio. This was the first meeting between



Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers’ Meeting (November 14, Lima, Peru)



Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting (November 15, Lima, Peru; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)



Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting (February 7, 2025, Washington, D.C., U.S.; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)



Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting (January 20, 2025, Washington, D.C., U.S.)

the two Ministers. Foreign Minister Iwaya congratulated Secretary Rubio on his appointment, and the two Ministers concurred to work together to continue elevating the Japan-U.S. Alliance to new heights and to realize FOIP. Furthermore, the two Ministers concurred to maintain close partnership to further uphold and bolster Japan-U.S. relations, which have become stronger than ever.

On February 7, Prime Minister Ishiba, during his visit to Washington, D.C., held the first in-person meeting with President Trump. The two leaders shared views on the severe and complex security environment and concurred to work closely to realize FOIP and to elevate the Japan-U.S. Alliance to new heights. They also concurred to strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance. Prime Minister Ishiba reiterated Japan's unwavering commitment to fundamentally reinforcing its defense capabilities and President Trump welcomed such commitment. President Trump underscored the unwavering commitment by the U.S. to the defense of Japan, using its full range of capabilities, including nuclear. The two leaders

once again reaffirmed that Article V of the Japan-U.S. Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security applies to the Senkaku Islands. The two leaders confirmed their commitment to the steady implementation of the realignment of U.S. Forces in Japan in accordance with the Okinawa Consolidation Plan, including the construction of the Futenma Replacement Facility at Henoko and the return of Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma. The two leaders exchanged views on regional situations such as issues related to China, dealing with North Korea including on the nuclear and missile issues as well as the abductions issue. The two leaders concurred on the importance of further developing coordination of like-minded countries, including Japan-U.S.-ROK, Japan-Australia-India-U.S., and Japan-U.S.-Philippines. They shared the intention to maintain close partnership to further uphold and bolster Japan-U.S. relations, which have become stronger than ever, and they issued a joint statement. At the end of the meeting, Prime Minister Ishiba invited President Trump to make an official visit to Japan at an early date.

(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 five consecutive years in terms of outstanding direct investment in the U.S. (783.3 billion U.S. dollars in 2023), and helped to create approximately 970,000 jobs in 2022 (second place following the United Kingdom). In addition to Japanese companies strengthening ties, 2024 was a year in which Japan-U.S. economic relations

further deepened, including the Prime Minister's visit to the U.S.

On April 10, Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting with President Biden in which the two leaders shared the recognition that facilitating private sector-led two-way investment between Japan and the U.S. is crucial for the two countries to together lead global economic growth. Touching upon the investments by Japanese companies in North Carolina, where he was scheduled to visit during his stay in the U.S., Prime Minister Kishida explained that Japanese companies have made tremendous contributions to the U.S. economy through investments and job creation, to which President Biden expressed his applause. With a view to maintaining and strengthening competitiveness in advanced technologies, including semiconductors, artificial intelligence (AI), and quantum technology, the two leaders welcomed the materialization of ongoing research and development cooperation and confirmed their intention to accelerate bilateral collaboration on establishing start-up environments that promote innovation and human resource development exchange. The two leaders concurred on strengthening cooperation to respond to economic coercion, non-market policies and practices, and overproduction, enhance supply chains resilience, and work toward the realization of sustainable and inclusive economic growth through efforts such as decarbonization. In this context, the two leaders shared the view to further deepen coordination toward ensuring economic security either bilaterally, through the G7, or based on other various frameworks. Furthermore, Prime Minister Kishida stated that the U.S. economic engagement in the Indo-Pacific region is essential, and the two leaders exchanged views on the economic order of the region.

Japan and the U.S. are also 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 Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (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, the IPEF Supply Chain Agreement (Pillar 2) entered into force on February 24, 2024. Furthermore, an IPEF Ministerial Meeting and Investor Forum were held in

Singapore in June, and signing ceremonies were held for the IPEF Clean Economy Agreement (Pillar 3), the IPEF Fair Economy Agreement (Pillar 4), and the IPEF Agreement. The IPEF Clean Economy Agreement and the IPEF Agreement entered into force on October 11. The IPEF Fair Economy Agreement entered into force on October 12.

Regarding the Japan-U.S. Partnership on Trade, which was launched in November 2021, a meeting was held in July 2024, 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. In addition, regarding the Japan-U.S. Economic Policy Consultative Committee (the Economic "2+2"), which was launched in January 2022, a Vice-Ministerial Meeting was held in September 2024, where Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Akahori, Vice-Minister for International Affairs at the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry Matsuo, Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy and the Environment Jose W. Fernandez, and Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade Marisa Lago confirmed they would further materialize bilateral initiatives toward (a) strengthening the rules-based economic order in the Indo-Pacific region as well as (b) protecting and promoting critical and emerging technologies. They also concurred to work toward further strengthening the bilateral economic relationship, including expanding mutual investment between Japan and the U.S. Both sides shared the recognition that the Economic "2+2" has been functioning as an effective framework in promoting Japan-U.S. cooperation in areas including economic security. Furthermore, they confirmed that, through this framework, they will continue to discuss diplomacy, security, and economy as a whole and further strengthen their cooperation on common challenges, including economic security as well as maintaining and strengthening the rules-based economic order.

During the eighth and ninth expert-level working group meetings of the Japan-U.S. Global Digital Connectivity Partnership (GDGP) held in May and October, government officials and the private sector exchanged views on Open RAN, 5G, and submarine cables, among other issues, and Japan and the U.S. seized various other opportunities to strengthen

COLUMN

A New Tradition in New York, the City of Parades
— Japan Parade

Consulate General of Japan in New York

What comes to mind when you think of New York? Perhaps it is the night view of skyscrapers, or the hustle and bustle of New Year's Eve in Times Square? New York is actually known as a city of parades, hosting approximately 200 to 250 parades each year. On weekends, multiple parades take place across the city, celebrating specific holidays, countries, or ethnic communities, sometimes even several in a single day. Many people have probably seen the longstanding Thanksgiving Day Parade on the news, but beyond that, there are parades honoring Irish, Italian, Caribbean, and other cultures and traditions. Meanwhile, aside from occasional events like the welcome parade held in 1860 for a Japanese diplomatic mission to the U.S., New York has never had a recurring Japan-related parade.

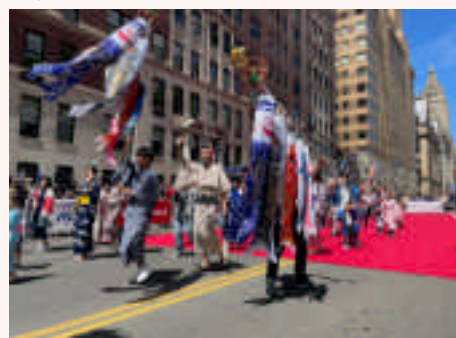
Facets of Japanese culture, such as anime and cuisine, as well as the activities of Japanese companies, the Consulate General, and the Japanese American community — including individuals of Japanese descendants — have been warmly embraced by Americans as an everyday part of life in the U.S. and New York. For this, the Japanese American community expressed its gratitude to New York by holding the first Japan Parade in May 2022 along Central Park West in the heart of Manhattan.

Japanese and Japanese Americans, as well as Americans with an interest in Japan, participated in the parade. It featured groups ranging from Japanese traditional performing artists to anime fans, schools, and local police and fire departments, leaving a strong impression on spectators of the diverse and vibrant exchanges between Japan and the U.S. The parade also included performances featuring popular Japanese anime characters, as well as booths showcasing a broad range of Japanese cuisine. The event was covered by various media outlets, including the three major U.S. television networks.

At the third Japan Parade held in May 2024, 2,500 marchers participated in the procession and the event attracted a crowd of 50,000 people along the route. The parade is steadily becoming a hallmark of early summer in New York and serves as a good opportunity to highlight Japan's presence and its contributions to the society and economy of the U.S.

In particular, the third Japan Parade featured a float commemorating 2024 as “U.S.-Japan Tourism Year,” as well as the first-ever participation of a Japanese local government, Yamaguchi City, which was ranked third in the New York Times’ “52 Places to Go in 2024.” To promote the city’s charm and culture, the float showcased Mayor ITO Kazutaka of Yamaguchi City, members of the Yamaguchi *Gion Bayashi* Preservation Society, and “Yuda Yuko,” *Yuda Onsen*’s mascot character. The float drew significant attention from the crowd and became one of the high points of the parade. With some spectators expressing interest in visiting Yamaguchi — saying things like “I’d love to go there!” — Yamaguchi City’s participation was recognized as a good practice in attracting inbound tourism to regional cities and held significant value in terms of promoting regional cooperation.

There are various Japan-related events held on a regular basis in New York, including the Japan Parade. Seeing is believing. If you ever have the opportunity, please come and experience Japan in New York.



Scenes from the third Japan Parade (top) with Yamaguchi City's float (bottom) (May 11, New York, U.S.)

COLUMN

Assistance for the Maui Wildfire

Consulate General of Japan in Honolulu

On August 8, 2023, dry and strong winds caused by the passage of Hurricane Dora sparked wildfires across the Hawaiian Islands. On Maui, at least 102 people lost their lives, and approximately 2,200 buildings in the town of Lahaina and 550 buildings in the district of Kula were damaged. Total damages are estimated at 5.5 billion U.S. dollars, making it the most destructive fire in U.S. history in the past 100 years.

The town of Lahaina, which was particularly hard hit, was the capital of the Kingdom of Hawaii in the early 19th century. It is designated in the National Register of Historic Places and is a historic preservation area. It was home to many historical and cultural buildings and was one of Maui's main tourist destinations. However, the town was burned to the ground in an instant, and many residents and tourists were forced to evacuate with only the clothes on their backs.

Japan and Hawaii share deep and strong historical, cultural, economic, and geopolitical ties. After the fires broke out, Japanese local governments, companies, voluntary organizations, and individuals sent considerable support. The Government of Japan also provided a total of approximately 2 million U.S. dollars in assistance through the American Red Cross and Japan Platform (JPF)¹ for the victims of the disaster. Japan also organized the Kibou for Maui Project in collaboration with the U.S.-Japan Council (USJC),² a Japanese-American organization founded by Japanese-Americans that remains active today. This project seeks to build a more disaster-resilient future by inviting affected students and leaders from the State of Hawaii and the County of Maui to Japan to share Japan's experiences and knowledge in disaster recovery and reconstruction.

One part of the project, the TOMODACHI Kibou for Maui Program invited 21 high school students from Maui to the Tohoku region in March and July, 2024. When the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred in Japan in 2011, a similar program called the TOMODACHI Initiative³ was organized by USJC and the U.S. Embassy in Japan. At that time, students from Tohoku were invited to Hawaii to participate in a program that offered spiritual healing through experiential learning. The participants from that time played a central role in welcoming Maui high school students to Japan this time. High school students from Maui said that they saw a ray of hope for the future after interacting with Japanese people and learning about local government reconstruction efforts, disaster risk reduction, environmental protection efforts, and leadership.

In May, a program for the leadership delegation from the County of Maui was held, with a delegation of 15 people visiting Japan led by Maui County Mayor Richard Bissen. In the Tohoku region, they exchanged views with local government officials and visited local companies and energy facilities. In Tokyo, they visited companies engaged in disaster risk reduction and mitigation projects. After returning home in August, a meeting was held where the participating students and leaders shared their experiences in Japan and engaged in lively exchanges of opinions regarding the recovery and reconstruction of the town of Lahaina. The students actively participated in the discussion on how to better develop the town, including ways to maintain a balance between the living environment of local residents and tourism — the main industry in Lahaina — while still respecting its history and culture, efforts toward further economic development, and measures to handle changes in the natural environment.



Participants of the first cohort of the TOMODACHI Kibou for Maui (March, Higashi-Matsushima City, Miyagi Prefecture; Photo: USJC)



Participants in the Kibou for Maui Project leadership delegation program (May, Tokyo; Photo: USJC)

Japan and Hawaii have long fostered people-to-people bonds while cooperating, helping, and learning from each other in response to common challenges, including natural disasters. It is hoped that Japan's support for the Maui wildfire will contribute to the recovery of the affected areas, deepen mutual understanding and trust between Japan and Hawaii, and lead to a future bound by even stronger ties.

- 1 JPF: Japan Platform, or JPF, is an NGO established in August 2000 (obtained NGO status in May 2001). It was established jointly by NGOs, the business community, and the Government of Japan, with the purpose of providing prompt and effective emergency humanitarian assistance activities by Japanese NGOs in response to natural disasters and refugee situations outside of Japan.
- 2 USJC: The U.S.-Japan Council is an educational non-profit organization established in 2009, with headquarters in Washington, D.C. and offices in California, Hawaii, and Tokyo.
- 3 The TOMODACHI Initiative is a public-private partnership between USJC and the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo that was born out of support for Japan's recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake. It invests in the next generation of Japanese and American leaders through educational and cultural exchanges, as well as leadership programs.

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 jointly engage with under 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.

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 2024, the Japan-U.S. Business Conference, the Joint Meeting of the Japan-Midwest U.S. Association and the Midwest U.S.-Japan Association, and the Joint Meeting of the Southeast U.S.-Japan and Japan-U.S. Southeast Associations were held in person in the U.S. The governors of Texas and Idaho also visited Japan on separate occasions.

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.

3 Canada

(1) Canada's Domestic Situation

The Trudeau administration had been running its government stably thanks to the "Supply and Confidence Agreement" with the New Democratic Party (NDP) concluded in March 2022, but in September, the NDP announced the termination of the agreement. The ruling Liberal Party suffered defeats in the Toronto by-election in June and the Montreal by-election in September and has since carried out multiple cabinet reshuffles. In November, the Trudeau administration

announced a temporary reduction of the goods and services tax and support measures for citizens to revive the government's sluggish approval ratings. In December, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland resigned, and the Trudeau administration embarked on another cabinet reshuffle, but in January 2025, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his intention to resign as leader of the Liberal Party and as Prime Minister. On the economic front, according to the Department of Finance

Canada's economic statement in December, real GDP growth in 2024 is expected to be 1.3% (1.2% in the previous year), the unemployment rate to be 6.4% (5.4% in the previous year), and the annual average of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to be 2.5% (3.9% in the previous year). In addition, the government was unable to achieve the goal set out in the previous year's economic statement of keeping the fiscal deficit for fiscal year 2023-24 below the 40.1 billion Canadian dollars projected in the 2023 budget guideline.

On the diplomatic front, Canada has been strengthening its involvement in the Indo-Pacific region based on the Indo-Pacific Strategy announced in November 2022. Canada's Defence Policy, revised in April 2024 also sets forth a policy of ensuring a persistent presence in the region. In 2024, Canada further strengthened its presence in the Indo-Pacific with the deployment of three warships to the region.

There have also been major developments in the traditionally stable U.S.-Canada relationship. After the U.S. presidential election in November, President-elect Trump announced that he would impose a 25% tariff on all products from Canada and Mexico, citing illegal immigration and the influx of fentanyl. In response to this, Prime Minister Trudeau had a telephone call with President-elect Trump and visited Florida for a dinner with the President-elect. In addition, in response to the concerns of President-elect Trump, the Government of Canada announced in December a comprehensive plan to strengthen border security over six years, worth 1.3 billion Canadian dollars.

Based on the "Strategic Partnership" established with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in September 2023, Canada is strengthening its relationship with ASEAN, including holding a special summit in October to strengthen ASEAN connectivity and resilience. In December, Canada announced that negotiations for a comprehensive economic partnership agreement with Indonesia had been concluded. Regarding relations with China, in July, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mélanie Joly visited China for the first time in seven years as a Canadian foreign minister. In August, the Government of Canada announced additional tariff measures of 100% on Chinese-made electric vehicles (EVs) and 25% on steel and aluminum products from China, to protect Canadian workers and

key economic sectors from China's unfair trade practices. These measures were applied starting in October. Dialogue is continuing, with the foreign ministers of Canada and China holding a meeting during the APEC Ministerial Meeting in November. Regarding relations with Taiwan, former President Tsai Ing-wen visited Canada for the first time in November and delivered a speech at the Halifax International Security Forum. As for relations with the ROK, a Canada-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in July, and the Canada-Korea Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Action Plan was adopted. The first Foreign and Defense Ministers' Meeting "2+2" was held in November. Relations with India have remained tense since the murder of a Sikh leader in Canada in 2023. In May, the Government of Canada arrested three Indian suspects. Also in October, both Canada and India announced the expulsion of six diplomatic and consular staff.

In response to the situation in Ukraine, Canada has continued to impose sanctions on Russia and provide support to Ukraine, including making statements expressing full support for Ukraine's use of long-range weapons. Since February 2022, the Government of Canada has committed a total of 19.5 billion Canadian dollars (approximately 2.1 trillion Japanese yen) in assistance, including military assistance totaling 4.5 billion Canadian dollars. In October, Canada hosted a ministerial meeting on Ukraine's Peace Formula in Vancouver. In response to the situation in Israel and Palestine, the Government of Canada announced new humanitarian aid of 50 million Canadian dollars in November, bringing the total amount of humanitarian aid to 215 million Canadian dollars (approximately 23 billion Japanese yen).

(2) Japan-Canada Relations

From January 2024 to the end of January 2025, three summit meetings and four foreign ministers' meetings were held between Japan and Canada.

On January 13, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Foreign Minister Joly's hometown of Montreal for a Japan-Canada Foreign Ministers' Meeting. The two 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



Japan-Canada Foreign Ministers' Meeting (January 13, Montreal, Canada)



Japan-Canada Foreign Ministers' Meeting (July 22, Tokyo)

exchanges, the success of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, and to achieve a world without nuclear weapons.

On June 14, Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau while visiting Apulia, Italy, to attend the G7 Summit. Prime Minister Kishida welcomed Canada's recent revision of its Defence Policy, in which Canada expressed its commitment to contribute to stability in the Indo-Pacific region by maintaining a more persistent presence. He also welcomed recent progress in Japan-Canada cooperation in the area of the rule of law including surveillance activities against illegal ship-to-ship transfers and illegal fishing. The two leaders confirmed that Japan and Canada would continue to work together to contribute to the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

On July 22, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a working lunch with Foreign Minister Joly, who was visiting Japan. The two Ministers welcomed the new cooperation being advanced in the joint exercises and surveillance activities targeting IUU fishing, and concurred to continue to work together to promote bilateral cooperation on economic issues,



Japan-Canada Summit Meeting (September 22, New York, U.S.; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

including the establishment of a comprehensive EV value chain. The two Ministers also concurred to keep promoting bilateral cooperation in the areas of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) as well as in the Arctic.

On September 22, Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau while visiting New York, U.S., to attend the United Nations General Assembly, where Prime Minister Kishida recognized Canada's contribution as the chair of the CPTPP in 2024 and mentioned that Japan would like to continue cooperating with Canada toward a world without nuclear weapons.

On October 11, immediately after assuming his position, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone call with Foreign Minister Joly. The two Ministers confirmed their intention to advance bilateral and G7 cooperation with Canada and concurred to hold a face-to-face foreign ministers' meeting at an early date.

On November 18, Prime Minister Ishiba, who was visiting Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to attend the G20 Summit, held his first meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau. The two leaders concurred to continue working together toward promoting bilateral economic and security cooperation including on the liquefied natural gas (LNG) production and EVs. The two leaders confirmed that they would cooperate on regional situations such as responses toward North Korea and relations with China, and given Canada's G7 Presidency in 2025, the two leaders concurred to continue working closely together toward the success of the G7 Summit.

On November 26, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a meeting with Foreign Minister Joly during his visit to Fiuggi, Italy to attend the G7 Foreign Ministers'



Japan-Canada Summit Meeting (November 18, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil;
Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

Meeting. The two Ministers shared the view on the importance of cooperation among like-minded countries in relation to the regional situations, including deepening military cooperation between Russia and North Korea, and situations in the Middle East, Ukraine and East Asia. Foreign Minister Iwaya welcomed Canada's increased engagement in the Indo-Pacific region, stating that the security in the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions is inseparable, and that Japan would support Canada during its G7 Presidency in 2025.

In the economic and trade fields, Japan cooperated with Canada, the 2024 chair of the CPTPP, in advancing discussions on issues such as accessions to the CPTPP and the general review, with a view to maintaining and strengthening a free and fair economic order in the Indo-Pacific. Japan also worked together with Canada on reform of the World Trade Organization (WTO), including discussions in the Ottawa Group. In October, the first meeting of the Dialogue based on the Memorandum of Cooperation concerning Battery Supply Chains, which was signed in September 2023, was held in Ottawa. At this meeting, the participants discussed collaboration between Japan and Canada on battery supply chains, exchange



Japan-Canada Foreign Ministers' Meeting (November 26, Fiuggi, Italy)

of information on policies of the two countries, measures to promote trade and investment, and research and development, among other topics. The two countries reaffirmed that they would continue to strengthen their coordination based on the Memorandum of Cooperation in order to build sustainable and reliable global battery supply chains, from the perspectives of carbon neutrality and economic security. In addition, economic relations between Japan and Canada have been further strengthened through the establishment of a comprehensive EV value chain in Canada and bilateral cooperation on LNG Canada.

In the field of science and technology, the 16th Japan-Canada Joint Committee Meeting on Cooperation in Science and Technology took place in Tokyo in May. The meeting provided an opportunity to share information on recent developments concerning national policies on science, technology, and innovation (STI); discuss funding opportunities and researcher mobility, mechanisms for co-innovation, Open Science, and research security/integrity; and highlight current and future bilateral initiatives in various fields: energy research, Arctic research, aerospace, health-related technologies, semiconductors, nanotechnology, physics R&D, quantum, AI, and marine/ocean research.

Section 4

Latin America and the Caribbean

1 Overview

(1) Situations in Latin America and the Caribbean

As the free and open international order based on the rule of law faces serious challenges, and the presence of the developing and emerging countries known as the Global South grows, cooperation with countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean (hereafter referred to as “LAC”) region, many of which share values and principles such as freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, is gaining renewed importance. At the same time, the LAC region has great economic potential, with a population of approximately 660 million and gross regional product of approximately 6.5 trillion U.S. dollars. The region also has abundant mineral resources and energy, which are vital for decarbonization, food resources, and more. As such, the region is becoming increasingly important from the perspective of strengthening supply chain resilience and economic security of the international community, including Japan. While the region's GDP growth rate is projected to be 2.1% in 2024, continuing the positive growth trend since 2022, social challenges such as income inequality and security are still matters of utmost priority for many LAC countries.

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.

These communities have fostered a traditional sense of affinity toward Japan in LAC countries through contributions to the local areas for more than a century.

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. In this regard, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)

has implemented measures to strengthen collaboration with the Nikkei communities, including inviting young Nikkei people to Japan and supporting the holding of events by young Nikkei people in various countries to promote creation of networks. In January 2023, MOFA established the Division for Collaboration with Communities of Japanese Immigrants and Descendants (“Nikkei”) in Latin America. In addition, during Prime Minister Kishida's visit to Paraguay and Brazil in May, Prime Minister Ishiba's visit to Peru and Brazil in November, and Foreign Minister Iwaya's visit to Peru in November, meetings were held with Nikkei people, confirming that collaboration will be strengthened with the Nikkei communities.

(2) Japanese Diplomacy toward Latin America and the Caribbean Countries

Japan's diplomacy toward the LAC region has developed under the guiding principle of the three “Juntos!!” (meaning “together”) since 2014. In May, Prime Minister Kishida gave a policy speech on the LAC region in Brazil entitled “Paving a Pathway to ‘Human Dignity’ with Latin America and the Caribbean,” updating Japan's guideline for the first time in a decade. In the speech, he outlined the following three key directions: (a) Ensuring the free and open international order based on the rule of law, (b) Overcoming common challenges that humanity faces such as the environment and climate change, and (c) Pursuing prosperity that can be shared by all people in the world and does not come at others' expense. Taking into account changes in the international community and the issues it faces, he indicated Japan's resolve to work together with LAC countries to open a new path through dialogue. In addition, in February in Panama, Foreign Minister Kamikawa announced the Diplomacy Initiative toward Latin

America and the Caribbean. The initiative pursues new forms of cooperation with LAC countries by integrating themes of growing importance, such as the oceans and gender equality, as well as Japan's unique bond with the LAC region through the Nikkei community, into Japan's traditional diplomatic efforts. Under this new guideline for LAC diplomacy and the initiative to implement it, Japan's diplomacy toward the LAC region showed further deepening in 2024.

Following Prime Minister Kishida's visits to Paraguay and Brazil in May, Prime Minister Ishiba made an Official Visit to Peru in November on the occasion of the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting. He also visited Brazil to attend the G20 Rio de Janeiro Summit, where he held a meeting with President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Foreign Minister Kamikawa also visited Brazil in February during the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, where she held meetings with the foreign ministers of Brazil, Bolivia, and Mexico. She then visited Panama and paid a courtesy call on President Laurentino Cortizo Cohen. In addition, Foreign Minister Iwaya visited Peru in November to attend the APEC Ministerial Meeting and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Elmer Schialer. Furthermore, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUGE Yoshifumi visited Mexico in April. Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs HOSAKA Yasushi also visited Honduras and Guatemala in January; Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana,

and El Salvador in June; and Brazil in July. Many ministers and others from MOFA and related ministries and agencies also visited countries in the LAC region. In Tokyo as well, Foreign Minister Kamikawa, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge, and Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Hosaka continued their dialogue with ambassadors from LAC countries stationed in Japan.

On the economic front, supply chain connections are being strengthened, including the continuing trend of increases in the number of Japanese companies operating in the LAC region, which reached 3,047 in 2023.

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 November, the process began for Costa Rica's accession to the CPTPP.

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⁾ the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC), the following regional organizations in the LAC region conduct policy coordination on various issues.

(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. Singapore is an Associated State to the PA. Japan is an Observer State and places importance on cooperation with the group as it shares common values and principles.

(2) Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR)⁽²⁾

In August, with the entry into force of the Protocol of Accession of Bolivia to MERCOSUR, Bolivia joined MERCOSUR alongside Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay,

⁽¹⁾ CELAC: Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States)

⁽²⁾ MERCOSUR: Mercado Común del Sur (Southern Common Market)

and Uruguay. (Venezuela is a member but is currently suspended.)

With a few exceptions, tariffs have been eliminated for all goods traded within the MERCOSUR region.

Regarding free trade agreements (FTAs), negotiations are ongoing with countries such as the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Canada. In July, negotiations were launched with the United Arab Emirates, and in December, an agreement was reached in the negotiations with the European Union (EU).

In relation to Japan, the Fifth Dialogue to Strengthen the Economic Relationship between Japan and Mercosur was held in Paraguay in April for the first time in seven years. In November, during a summit meeting between Prime Minister Ishiba and President Lula of Brazil, the two leaders agreed to work together to discuss the Japan-MERCOSUR Strategic Partnership Framework (tentative name) as a forum for discussing win-win cooperation between the two sides in a wide range of areas, including trade and investment.

(3) Caribbean Community (CARICOM)⁽³⁾

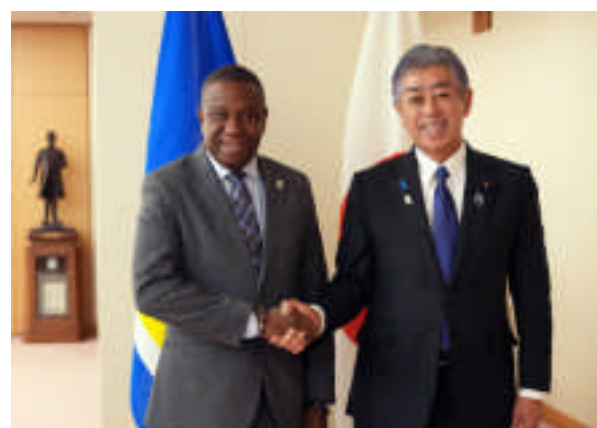
CARICOM was founded by 14 Caribbean nations for economic integration and foreign policy coordination. It has a large presence in the international arena due to its coordinated actions. Although CARICOM countries include many countries with relatively high incomes, they are threatened by natural disasters 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.

Japan is leading its diplomacy in accordance with the three pillars for Japan-CARICOM cooperation. Japan is also providing support to high-income level countries based on their development needs and economic capabilities. Cooperation progressed in 2024, designated as Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024, including the Eighth Japan-CARICOM Ministerial-Level Conference.

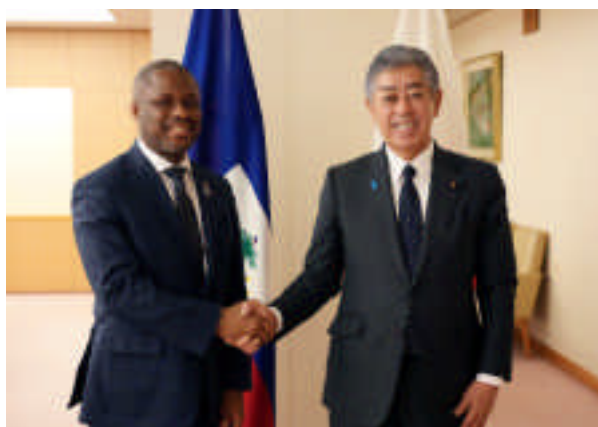
In Haiti, since the assassination of the president in 2021, political instability has led to stagnation



Japan-Belize Foreign Ministers' Meeting (December 14, Tokyo)



Japan-Saint Lucia Foreign Ministers' Meeting (December 14, Tokyo)



Japan-Haiti Foreign Ministers' Meeting (December 13, Tokyo)



Japan-Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Foreign Ministers' Meeting (December 14, Tokyo)

⁽³⁾ CARICOM: Caribbean Community (Member countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana, Grenada, Jamaica, Suriname, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Dominica, Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti, Bahamas, Barbados, and Belize)

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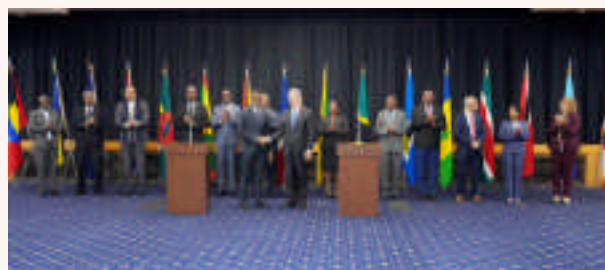
Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024

■ Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024

The year 2024 was celebrated as the strengthening of cooperative relations between Japan and Caribbean countries (See the Opening Special Feature). Because 2024 marked the 30th anniversary of the start of the Japan-CARICOM (Caribbean Community) Consultations, as well as the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and both Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, it was designated as “Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024.” Commemorative events were held in both Japan and CARICOM member states through public-private cooperation, deepening mutual understanding.

■ High-Level Exchanges

In February, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Kamina Johnson Smith of Jamaica visited Japan as a guest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). In March, Secretary-General of the CARICOM Carla Natalie Barnett visited Japan upon the invitation of MOFA. In December, which marked the conclusion of the Friendship Year, representatives from 14 CARICOM member states and the CARICOM Secretariat gathered in Tokyo to participate in the Japan-CARICOM Ministerial-Level Conference, which resulted in the issuance of the Ministerial Joint Statement. Foreign ministers from 12 CARICOM member states attended and held bilateral meetings with Foreign Minister Iwaya, making 2024 a year of active high-level exchanges. In 2025 as well, mutual visits by dignitaries are scheduled, and Japan will continue to strengthen its relations with the Caribbean countries.



Foreign Minister Iwaya shakes hands with Foreign Minister Vince Henderson of Dominica (Co-chair) and foreign ministers of CARICOM member states (December 14, Tokyo)

■ Cooperation Between Japan and CARICOM Member States

The presence of CARICOM member states is growing, as they make up about 7% of the United Nations member states and play important roles in the international arena.

Japan and CARICOM member states have steadily expanded and deepened their cooperative relationship under the three pillars announced in 2014: (1) Cooperation towards sustainable development; (2) Expanding fraternal bonds of cooperation and friendship; and (3) Cooperation in the international arena.

Meanwhile, over the past ten years, the environment surrounding Japan and CARICOM member states has completely changed. Intensifying global issues such as climate change have become more severe, and the free and



Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year Reception (March 26, Iikura Guest House, MOFA, Tokyo)

open international order based on the rule of law that Japan and CARICOM member states have jointly upheld is now facing open challenges.

Amid such circumstances, it is increasingly important to strengthen relations with CARICOM member states, which have a strong sense of responsibility in addressing global issues. Although geographically distant, Japan and CARICOM member states will continue to promote cooperation in the international arena, coordination of bilateral policies, strengthening of economic relations, development cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges, under their global partnership based on shared values and principles.



Logo for Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024

of administrative and legislative functions, and the humanitarian situation for the population has worsened due to the influence of armed groups (gangs). In response, in June, at the request of the Government of Haiti, a Multinational Security Support Mission began operations based on a UN Security Council resolution. In light of the dispatch of this mission, Japan decided to provide an additional 17 million U.S. dollars in support aimed at improving the security and humanitarian situation.

3 LAC Countries

(1) Mexico

A presidential election was held in June in Mexico, and the ruling party candidate Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo was elected with a high vote share of approximately 60%, assuming the presidency in October. In addition, in the federal upper and lower house elections held on the same day, the ruling coalition secured nearly enough seats to amend the Constitution in both houses.

In regard to relations with Japan, in February, Foreign Minister Kamikawa, who was visiting Brazil to attend the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, held a foreign ministers' meeting with Secretary of Foreign Affairs Alicia Bárcena Ibarra. In April, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge visited Mexico to attend the Congreso Nacional Nikkei (CONANI) and Expo Japón. In addition, from September to October, Ambassador on Special Mission NAKASONE Hirofumi (Member of the House of Councillors) visited Mexico and attended President Sheinbaum's inauguration ceremony, in addition to holding a meeting with incoming Secretary of Economy Marcelo Ebrard Casaubon and others.

In regard to economic relations, Japanese companies have continued to expand into Mexico in the context of nearshoring (establishing supply sources close to consumer markets), reaching about 1,500 companies, the highest number in the LAC region.

(4) Central American Integration System (SICA)⁽⁴⁾

SICA was established in 1992 with the aim of promoting regional economic and social integration and achieving peace, freedom, democracy, and development. Its eight member countries are El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, Belize, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic.

Since 1995, Japan has held policy consultations with SICA member countries through the Japan-Central America Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation. Since 2010, Japan has served as an external observer and held high-level dialogue with SICA.

During the September meeting between Ambassador on Special Mission Nakasone (Member of the House of Councillors) and incoming Secretary of Economy Ebrard, they shared recognition of the importance of bilateral relations, particularly economic relations, and confirmed that both countries would further strengthen relations under their new administrations.

In regard to relations with third countries, Mexico traditionally places importance on its relations with the United States (U.S.) and the LAC region. In September, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador and President-elect Sheinbaum held a meeting with President Lula of Brazil prior to his inauguration ceremony. At President Sheinbaum's inauguration ceremony in October, heads of state and ministers from various LAC countries, as well as heads of international organizations were in attendance, and President Sheinbaum held a meeting with President Miguel Díaz-Canel of Cuba.

(2) Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Panama, Honduras, and Belize)

In regard to relations with El Salvador, the inauguration ceremony for President Nayib Armando Bukele Ortiz, who was elected for a second term in February, was held in June, and Parliamentary Vice-Minister for

⁽⁴⁾ SICA: Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana

Foreign Affairs Hosaka attended as an Ambassador on Special Mission. In addition, in October, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Adriana María Mira De Pereira visited Japan for the second time following her visit in June. Vice Minister Mira and Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Hosaka signed a memorandum on the establishment of a policy consultation mechanism between Japan and El Salvador and held the first Japan-El Salvador Policy Consultation.

In regard to relations with Guatemala, Ambassador on Special Mission Hosaka (Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs) attended the inauguration ceremony for President César Bernardo Arévalo de León held in January, and paid a courtesy call on the President. In May, Minister of Foreign Affairs Carlos Ramiro Martínez visited Japan, and a Japan-Guatemala Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held.

In regard to relations with Costa Rica, in August, First Vice-President Stephan Brunner Neibig visited Japan on behalf of President Rodrigo Chaves and attended the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony for the first time at the ministerial level. He also held consultations with Chief Cabinet Secretary HAYASHI Yoshimasa. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship Arnoldo André, who accompanied the Vice-President, held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Kamikawa.

In regard to relations with the Dominican Republic, 2024 marked the 90th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Dominican Republic, and various commemorative events were held in both countries. In the presidential election held in May, incumbent President Luis Rodolfo Abinader Corona was re-elected. Ambassador on Special Mission WATANABE Hiromichi (Member

of the House of Representatives) attended the presidential inauguration ceremony held in August and paid a courtesy call on the President, among other activities. In addition, the third Japan-Dominican Republic Policy Consultation was held in February.

In regard to relations with Panama in 2024, which marked the 120th anniversary of the establishment of Japan-Panama diplomatic relations, congratulatory messages were exchanged between the leaders in conjunction with the date of the establishment of diplomatic relations, January 7. Commemorative ceremonies were held in both Japan and Panama, and the introduction of visa exemption for short-term stays by Panamanian nationals was announced. In addition, in February, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Panama and paid a courtesy call on President Laurentino Cortizo Cohen. Furthermore, in the presidential election held in May, candidate José Raúl Mulino of Realizando Metas (RM) party was elected. Ambassador on Special Mission IMAMURA Masahiro (Member of the House of Representatives) attended the presidential inauguration ceremony held in July and paid a courtesy call on the President, in addition to holding meetings with the outgoing and incoming foreign ministers and the Administrator of the Panama Canal Authority.

In regard to relations with Honduras, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Hosaka visited the country in January and paid a courtesy call on President Xiomara Castro, as well as exchanging views with the secretary of foreign affairs, the president of the National Congress, and others. In June, Private Secretary of the President of Honduras Manuel Héctor Zelaya Castro visited Japan and exchanged views with Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism SAITO



Japan-Guatemala Foreign Ministers' Meeting (May 22, Tokyo)



Japan-Costa Rica Foreign Ministers' Meeting (August 8, Tokyo)

Tetsuo and Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Hosaka, among others, regarding the interoceanic railway project being promoted by the Government of Honduras.

The Alliance for Development in Democracy (ADD), established in 2021 by Costa Rica, Panama, and the Dominican Republic, aims to promote development, cooperation, trade, and investment through highly transparent processes that respect human rights in the region, while coordinating with the U.S., which positions the Alliance as a group that shares common values and principles. In July, prior to the holding of elections in Venezuela, the ADD issued a statement requesting that the elections be conducted in a free, fair, and transparent manner.

(3) Cuba

The domestic economy has worsened to an extremely serious degree, including the key industry of tourism. Nationwide large-scale blackouts in October and natural disasters have made the lives of the Cuban people increasingly difficult. In response to the damage caused by Hurricane Rafael in November, Japan provided emergency assistance.

(4) Brazil

The administration of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva worked on initiatives such as launching the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty under the Brazilian G20 presidency. It also positioned environmental and climate change measures as key policy issues. In August, Brazil held the Amazon Summit in Belém in northern Brazil with participation by eight member countries of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, working to address global challenges.

In regard to relations with Japan, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Rio de Janeiro in February to attend the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting. She held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Mauro Vieira, during which she announced Japan's contribution to the Amazon Fund,⁽⁵⁾ the first by an Asian country. In May, Prime Minister Kishida made an Official Visit to Brazil, the first by a Japanese prime minister in 10 years. During the summit meeting with President Lula, the



Policy Speech by Prime Minister Kishida at the University of São Paulo (May 4, São Paulo, Brazil; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)



Japan-Brazil Summit Meeting (November 19, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)



Prime Minister Ishiba meeting with Nikkei people and Japanese national residents in Rio de Janeiro (November 19, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

two leaders launched the Japan-Brazil Green Partnership Initiative (GPI) to take cooperation on the environment, climate change, and sustainable development to an even higher level. In addition, in November, Prime Minister Ishiba visited Brazil to attend the G20 Rio de Janeiro Summit and held a meeting with President Lula, confirming that the two countries would further strengthen bilateral relations in 2025, the 130th

⁽⁵⁾ A fund established by the Government of Brazil with the aim of protecting the Amazon rainforest.

anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Brazil.

Moreover, in regard to economic relations, 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 November.

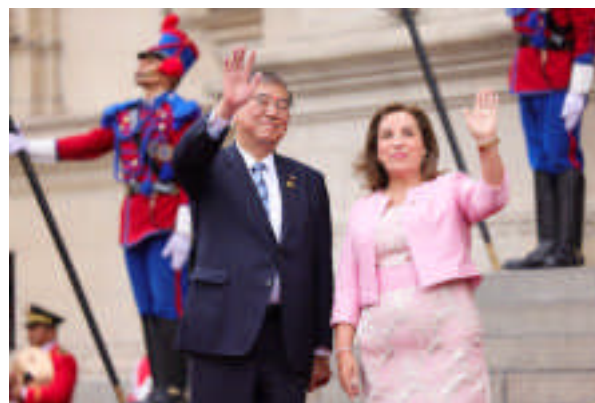
(5) Argentina

President Javier Milei, who took office in December 2023, has made economic and fiscal reconstruction the top priority of his administration. Under his belief in libertarian principles, he has advanced initiatives such as fiscal austerity and deregulation, as pledged in his campaign, and has achieved a certain degree of results in reducing the budget deficit, curbing inflation, and improving the investment environment through the implementation of a large investment incentive scheme. On the other hand, challenges remain, such as managing the legislature with a minority government administration, addressing the rise in the poverty rate, further deregulation, and achieving economic growth that can be sensed by the public.

In regard to relations with Japan, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a foreign ministers' telephone call with Minister of Foreign Affairs, international Trade and Worship Diana Mondino in January. In March, Minister Mondino visited Japan as a guest of MOFA. During their meeting, the two foreign ministers confirmed the importance of strengthening bilateral relations through the Nikkei community and other means, as well as cooperation in the international arena as important "strategic partners" that share fundamental values and principles. Furthermore, in June, at the G7 Apulia Summit held in Italy, Prime Minister Kishida had an informal talk with President Milei, marking their first interaction, in which they concurred on advancing cooperation between the two countries in the international arena.

(6) Peru

As the APEC Chair for 2024, Peru held meetings across various fields, including the Leaders' Meeting, under the theme of "Empower. Include. Grow."



Welcoming ceremony during Prime Minister Ishiba's Visit to Peru (November 17, Lima, Peru; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)



Prime Minister Ishiba meeting with Nikkei people residing in Peru (November 17, Lima, Peru; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)



Japan-Peru Foreign Ministers' Meeting (November 13, Lima, Peru)

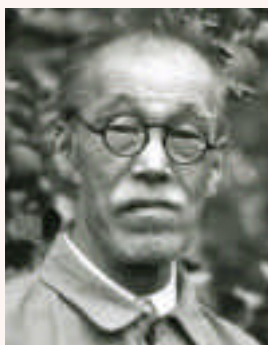
In regard to relations with Japan, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs KOMURA Masahiro visited Peru in May to attend the APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade (MRT) Meeting. In November, Prime Minister Ishiba and Foreign Minister Iwaya visited Peru to attend the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting and APEC Ministerial Meeting, respectively. During this time, Prime Minister Ishiba paid an Official Visit and held a summit meeting with President Dina

COLUMN

The Underlying Theme of the “Pathway” Demonstrated by Japan and the Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) Region During the “Year of Latin America and the Caribbean”

In May, Prime Minister Kishida visited Brazil and delivered a speech on Japan's foreign policy toward the LAC region, which was the first such speech by a Japanese prime minister in ten years. In it, he reflected on the history between Japan and the LAC region, recalling how LAC countries lent a helping hand to Japan during pivotal moments in Japan's modern history, such as the Meiji Restoration and the post World War II period. He introduced the fact that through a long history of friendship and cooperation, the relationship between the two sides has flourished into an important partnership in which the two countries respect and learn from each other. He also emphasized that as the international order faces new challenges and freedom and democracy are under threat now, it is precisely the time for Japan and the LAC region to look back on the “paths” they have taken together and to show a new “pathway” toward a better future. He called for cooperation rather than division and confrontation, and for making “diversity” and “inclusiveness” the basic premise for resolving issues.

At the close of the speech, he noted that both Japanese and Spanish languages have poems about a “path,” introducing “*Dotei*” by TAKAMURA Kotaro and a poem by the Spanish poet Antonio Machado. Takamura's verse, “There is no road before me. / But a road is created behind me,” resonates beautifully with Machado's nearly contemporaneous verse, “Traveler, there are no roads. / Roads are made by walking.” Is this merely a coincidence? In Japan, many children learn Takamura's “*Dotei*” in elementary school. In Spain and the LAC region, many people have memorized the beginning of Machado's “Traveler” poem. In other words, the notion of forging one's own path has been cultivated as a life lesson in both Japan and the LAC region, transcending geographical distance and cultural differences. This way of thinking can be seen as the underlying theme that Japan and the LAC region have demonstrated as they shared values and principles while respecting diversity throughout their long history of exchange.



TAKAMURA Kotaro (Photo: Hanamaki Takamura Kotaro Museum)



Antonio Machado



Prime Minister Kishida delivering a speech on Japan's foreign policy toward the LAC region (May 4, São Paulo, Brazil; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

The year 2024 was positioned as the “year of Latin America and the Caribbean,” constituting a favorable opportunity to strengthen Japan-LAC relations, in light of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting held in Peru, the G20 Summit held in Brazil, and commemorative events such as those of Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024. However, no matter how favorable the opportunity, it cannot be fully leveraged without the will to turn the “unknown” in front of us into a “path” through our own efforts, and without respect and trust toward others.

The year 2025 marks several milestones, including the 130th anniversary of the establishment of Japan-Brazil diplomatic relations and Japan-SICA (Central American Integration System) Friendship Year 2025 (marking the 90th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and five Central American countries¹). The 30th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP30) will also be held in Brazil. Following on from 2024, the year 2025 will also be positioned as part of the “Years of Latin America and the Caribbean,” and it is hoped more than ever that Japan and the LAC region will continue to move forward together, pioneering new “paths” not only for their own national interests but also for the stability of the international community as a whole and the resolution of shared issues facing humanity.

1 Five Central American countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Honduras

Boluarte. Taking into account the 150th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Peru in 2023, the two leaders adopted a joint statement and a roadmap for building broad cooperation over the next decade. Foreign Minister Iwaya also held a foreign ministers' meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmer Schialer, in which they confirmed the need to further strengthen bilateral relations.

(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. In regard to the new constitution-drafting process, the new draft constitution, which was prepared mainly by the Constitutional Council that was formed in June 2023, was rejected in a national referendum held in December. President Boric announced the end of the new constitution-drafting process during his term.

In regard to relations with Japan, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Gloria de la Fuente González visited Japan in June, during which the 10th Japan-Chile Policy Dialogue was held. In this policy dialogue, both countries concurred on deepening cooperative relations in a wide range of fields, including climate change, disaster risk reduction, space, gender equality, and the oceans.

(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 2024). Uruguay ranked first in the LAC region in the Democracy Index.⁽⁶⁾ 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 November, a presidential election was held in conjunction with the end of the incumbent president's term. The opposition candidate Yamandú Orsi, from the Broad Front, was elected as the next president and is scheduled to take office in March 2025.

(9) Paraguay

President Santiago Peña Palacios, who took office in August 2023, continues to uphold values and principles such as the rule of law and respect for human rights. He promotes a free and open economic policy, focusing on attracting investment and job creation.

In regard to relations with Japan, Minister of Foreign Affairs Rubén Darío Ramírez Lezcano visited Japan in March and held meetings with Chief Cabinet Secretary Hayashi and Foreign Minister Kamikawa. In May, Prime Minister Kishida visited Paraguay, marking the second such visit by a Japanese prime minister since 2018. During his summit meeting with President Peña, the two leaders concurred that as important partners sharing common values and principles, Japan and Paraguay will cooperate and strengthen relations in wide-ranging fields.



Joint Press Conference following the Japan-Paraguay Summit Meeting (May 3, Asunción, Paraguay; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

(10) Colombia

The Gustavo Francisco Petro Urrego administration, which was inaugurated in August 2022 as Colombia's first left-wing government, advocates for a "Government of Change." Its main policies include

(6) Source: Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index 2022

inclusive social reforms to address inequality, a transition to a decarbonized economy, and total peace. However, the administration faces difficulties in managing the legislature due to internal conflicts within the coalition government, and no prospects are currently in sight for passing various reform bills. Toward total peace with domestic armed forces, the Petro administration is attempting to advance peace negotiations with armed forces such as the National Liberation Army (ELN),⁽⁷⁾ but a path to total peace has yet to emerge.

In regard to relations with Japan, President of the Senate Iván Name visited Japan in February at the invitation of the House of Councillors and exchanged views with the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the House of Councillors. In addition, in September, the first meeting of the Joint Committee between Japan and the Republic of Colombia on Cooperation in Trade, Investment and Industry was held in Colombia, during which representatives from both countries' public and private sectors confirmed that the two countries will advance bilateral trade and investment promotion.

(11) Venezuela

In the presidential election held in July, incumbent President Nicolás Maduro declared victory. However, candidate Edmundo González of the opposition Unitary Platform claimed that based on the opposition's own investigation, he had won more than 67% of the vote and thus won the election. In response to the election results, protest demonstrations occurred in various parts of the country. According to media reports, more than 20 people were killed and over 1,100 were arrested. The transparency of the electoral process, including vote counting, has been called into question both domestically and internationally. The Maduro administration expelled the Venezuelan-based diplomats of Argentina, Costa Rica, Peru, Panama, and Uruguay, which recognized candidate González as the winner of the election, as well as of Chile and the Dominican Republic, which raised doubts regarding the transparency of the electoral process. In addition, the Maduro administration recalled Venezuelan

diplomats stationed in those countries. Meanwhile, countries such as Cuba, Nicaragua, and Honduras expressed their support for President Maduro, and a serious division has emerged within the LAC region over the situation in Venezuela. Regarding this election, Japan has called for ensuring the transparency of the presidential election process by disclosing all information necessary to support the reliability of the voting results so that the will of all Venezuelans who casted their ballots is respected.

In September, an arrest warrant was issued for the opposition Unitary Platform candidate Edmundo González, who subsequently went into exile in Spain. In response, countries including the U.S., Germany, and France as well as the EU issued statements criticizing the Maduro administration. In addition, in September and November, the U.S. announced additional individuals subject to sanctions against Venezuela. The Maduro administration reacted strongly, and tensions between the two sides have intensified.

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 has provided 130 million U.S. dollars in assistance to support both Venezuelan people, including people fleeing from Venezuela, and surrounding countries.

(12) Bolivia

In Bolivia, in relation to the presidential election scheduled for 2025, there is a conflict between former President Juan Evo Morales Aima, who has declared his candidacy, and President Luis Alberto Arce Catacora, who is seeking re-election. There is ongoing turmoil, including road blockades carried out by Morales supporters and clashes between those supporters and the police.

Regarding the economy, Bolivia's economic structure depends on exports of natural resources. However, 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

⁽⁷⁾ ELN: Ejército de Liberación Nacional, National Liberation Army

hand, Bolivia's estimated lithium resources are the largest in the world.

The Bolivian government has intensified its efforts toward lithium exploration and extraction, including signing an agreement in September with a Russian company and another in November with a Chinese company for the construction of lithium plants.

In regard to relations with Japan, 2024 marked the 110th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Bolivia, as well as the 125th anniversary of Japanese immigration to Bolivia. Throughout the year, various commemorative events were held in both countries. In February, the first Japan-Bolivia Foreign Ministers' Meeting in approximately 11 years was held, in which the ministers confirmed further strengthening of bilateral relations. In addition, in April, on the occasion of the ceremony held in Bolivia to commemorate the 110th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Bolivia, Foreign Minister Kamikawa delivered a congratulatory video message. In October, Japan provided emergency relief goods in response to the damage caused by forest fires in the country, in light of the humanitarian perspective and the close relations

between Japan and Bolivia.

(13) Ecuador

The administration of President Daniel Noboa, which was inaugurated in November 2023, declared a 60-day nationwide state of emergency in January following the prison escape of a criminal organization leader. Through a presidential decree, the administration also declared that the country was in a state of armed conflict with criminal organizations. The administration has since taken steps to restore public safety, including the construction of large-scale prisons and strengthening controls at borders and ports. In addition, in response to a historic drought and the resulting decline in the capacity of hydroelectric power generation, which is a major power source, the administration implemented planned power outages.

In regard to relations with Japan, Ecuador continued to serve as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) alongside Japan in 2024, as it also did in 2023. The two countries cooperated on responses to the current severe international situation and on strengthening the functions of the UN, including UNSC reform.

COLUMN

Fraternal Bonds

— The 110th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Bolivia and the 125th Anniversary of Japanese Immigration to Bolivia

Bolivia is a geographically distant nation located on the opposite side of the world from Japan. However, many people may have seen photos of the Andes Mountains, which are over 4,000 meters high, and Salar de Uyuni, which is said to be the largest salt flat in the world. Here, this column introduces the long history of friendship between Japan and Bolivia.

■ A History of Friendship

In 2024, Japan and Bolivia celebrated the 110th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations and the 125th anniversary of Japanese immigration to Bolivia. In February, the first Japan-Bolivia Foreign Ministers' Meeting in approximately 11 years was held, during which Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of Foreign Affairs Celinda Sosa Lunda concurred on strengthening bilateral relations. In March, a commemorative logo representing the two anniversaries was announced. In April, a commemorative ceremony for the 110th anniversary of the establishment of Japan-Bolivia diplomatic relations was held in Bolivia, and Foreign Minister Kamikawa sent a video message expressing her congratulations. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the two countries are further building their close relationship.

The first Japanese immigrants to Bolivia arrived in 1899. Among those who had initially migrated to Peru, some crossed the Andes Mountains and settled in Bolivia. After World War II, Japanese immigrants faced great hardship developing the land in the Okinawa and San Juan settlements, which were Nikkei (Japanese immigrants and their descendants) communities established near Santa Cruz in eastern Bolivia. However, through activities such as rice and soybean cultivation and poultry farming, these immigrants helped develop the region into one of Bolivia's leading agricultural production areas. Today, more than 13,000 Nikkei people live throughout Bolivia, playing a vital role as bridges of friendship between Japan and Bolivia.

■ Cooperation with Bolivia

In June, forest fires began in Bolivia and spread across the country, resulting in casualties, many people being affected, and material damages. In October, the Government of Japan provided emergency relief goods to Bolivia in order to support people affected by the disaster. In addition, Japan has been engaged in supporting Bolivia for many years. Focusing on key areas such as “developing economic infrastructure and diversifying the production sector” and “promoting social inclusion,” Japan has cooperated toward Bolivia's development in various fields. These fields include the construction of Viru Viru International Airport in Santa Cruz, the paving and improvement of the Okinawa Road connecting Nikkei settlements, renewable energy development, construction of school buildings for educational facilities, and provision of medical equipment.

■ Toward the Future

The number of Nikkei people in Bolivia is the fifth highest in the Latin American and the Caribbean region. Among them, Nikkei people in Bolivia are enthusiastic about Japanese language education, with young people who speak Japanese. Japanese culture continues to be passed down in the Japanese settlements, where traditional Japanese festivals are held.

It is expected that Japan and Bolivia will continue to nurture their fraternal bonds and cooperate together through various exchanges.



Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sosa at the Japan-Bolivia Foreign Ministers' Meeting (February 22, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)



The logo commemorating the two anniversaries. It features motifs such as the national flags of both countries and the kanji character “絆” (*kizuna*, which means bonds) at the center.



The emergency relief goods handover ceremony in response to forest fire damages (October 9, Santa Cruz, Bolivia)

Section 5

Europe

1 Overview

<The Importance of Cooperation with Europe, Which Shares Values and Principles>

The European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO),⁽¹⁾ and European countries are important partners for Japan, sharing values and principles such as freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. As Russia's aggression against Ukraine has continued for more than two years, threatening the existing international order and intensifying geopolitical competition, it is becoming even more important to strengthen cooperation with the EU, NATO, and European countries in order to respond to the challenges to the values and principles important to Japan and Europe, and to uphold the free and open international order based on the rule of law. In particular, as the need for international coordination in addressing global issues such as climate change has further increased, the necessity of 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 ability to communicate in the international community.

<Russia's Aggression Against Ukraine and Europe>

In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which began in February 2022, Japan has strongly promoted support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia, in close cooperation with the G7 and the rest of the international community, to end Russia's aggression as soon as possible. Japan has demonstrated solidarity with Ukraine at various levels, including at the leader's and ministerial levels, such as through the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction in February, the Japan-Ukraine Summit Meetings in April and September, and the visit to Ukraine by Foreign Minister Iwama in November. Japan has also closely cooperated with Ukraine to provide support that meet the needs of the country.

In Europe, Russia's aggression against Ukraine has become one of the most important issues. The EU, NATO, 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 macro financial 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

(1) NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization. For more information, see the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 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.



Ukraine).⁽³⁾ In addition, at the NATO Summit in July, NATO announced the decision to establish the NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU), expressed that Ukraine's future is in NATO, and reaffirmed its position to extend an invitation to Ukraine to join the Alliance when Allies agree and conditions are met. The United Kingdom (UK) has provided military, humanitarian, and economic support totaling 12.5 billion UK pounds, including 90 Brimstone missiles, and has announced it will continue military assistance to Ukraine totaling 3 billion UK pounds annually for as long as necessary through 2030. France held a conference in support of Ukraine in February and announced the provision of Mirage 2000-5 fighter jets during President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit in June. France continues to provide military, humanitarian, and economic assistance. Germany held the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Berlin in June and has provided support totaling approximately 37 billion euro since the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

<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 2024, 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 July, during his visit to Washington, D.C., Prime Minister Kishida attended the NATO Summit for the third consecutive year and shared the recognition with various countries that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable.

Throughout 2024, Prime Minister Kishida held summit meetings with the leaders of Italy, Ukraine, the UK, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, France, Finland, and Luxembourg, and confirmed close cooperation with these European countries.

At the foreign minister level, Foreign Minister Iwaya held the first-ever Japan-EU Foreign Ministerial Strategic Dialogue in which cooperation was deepened in the security field, including the announcement of the Japan-EU Security and Defence Partnership.

As for legal frameworks in the security field, the Japan-Germany Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (Japan-Germany ACSA) was signed in January and entered into force in July.

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>

The year 2024 was a year of organization change for the EU. In the European Parliament elections held in

⁽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.

June, the center-right European People's Party (EPP) retained its position as the largest political group, followed by the center-left Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) as the second largest group. Meanwhile, the liberal Renew Europe group and the environmentalist Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) lost ground, while right-wing and far-right groups gained momentum. In particular, the far-right saw significant gains in France and Germany. In response to the European Parliament election results, President Emmanuel Macron of France announced the dissolution of the National Assembly on June 9. Following the European Parliament elections, coalition negotiations were held to secure a majority that would influence the formation of political groups and key EU leadership appointments. Two new far-right political groups were formed: Patriots for Europe (PfE) and Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN). After coordination at the summit level, a new EU leadership structure was selected at the June European Council meeting, including António Luis Santos da Costa as President of the European Council and Ursula von der Leyen as President of the European Commission. A strategic agenda was also adopted, built on three main pillars: (a) a free and democratic Europe, (b) a strong and secure Europe, and (c) a prosperous and competitive Europe. The new European Commission took office in December, and President Costa of the European Council assumed his position in the same month.

As Russia continues its aggression against Ukraine, the EU has adopted 15 sanctions packages against Russia since February 2022. These include asset freezes and travel bans targeting more than 2,300 individuals and entities, as well as economic sanctions and media restrictions. In June, the EU signed the "Joint Security Commitments" with Ukraine. Furthermore, it adopted a negotiating framework for Ukraine's EU accession and formally began accession negotiations.

In addition, in October, the EU held its first-ever summit with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), committing to elevate the strategic partnership between the EU and GCC to the next level.

<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 June, Prime Minister Kishida held an informal talk with President von der Leyen of the European Commission during the G7 Apulia Summit in Italy. The two leaders concurred on continuing to work together on economic security issues within fora such as the G7. In September, during his visit to New York to attend the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting with President von der Leyen of the European Commission. During the meeting, President von der Leyen once again expressed gratitude for the significant development of Japan-EU relations under the Kishida administration. Building on this foundation, the two leaders concurred on continuing to strengthen Japan-EU relations. Furthermore, Prime Minister Kishida also held a meeting with President Charles Michel of the European Council. The two leaders exchanged views on Japan-EU relations as well as regional affairs, including the Indo-Pacific, and concurred on continuing close cooperation in various fields both between Japan and the EU and within the G7.

In November, Foreign Minister Iwaya held the first Japan-EU Foreign Ministerial Strategic Dialogue with High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell Fontelles, who was visiting Japan. During the dialogue, Foreign Minister Iwaya exchanged instruments related to ratification of the Japan-EU SPA, and the agreement formally entered into force on January 1, 2025. Furthermore, the Japan-EU Security and Defence Partnership was announced. Japan became the first country in the Indo-Pacific with which the EU publicly announced such a partnership. In light of the recent increasingly severe security environment, Japan and the EU concurred on strengthening concrete cooperation and dialogue in areas such as cyber issues, space, responses to hybrid threats, and maritime security. In addition, in February, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUGE Yoshifumi attended the Third EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum held in Brussels, Belgium. He welcomed the increasing interest and engagement of European countries and the EU in the Indo-Pacific and stated Japan's intention to cooperate

toward maintaining and strengthening the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

The EU, with its economic scale that follows the United States (U.S.) and China, is an important economic partner of Japan, ranking third 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. In addition, on July 1, the Protocol Amending the Agreement Between the European Union and Japan for an Economic Partnership entered into force, including provisions on the free flow of data. This amendment is expected to ensure predictability regarding cross-border data flows, promote data exchange between Japan and the EU, and ultimately contribute to strengthening Japan-EU economic relations. With regard to the Japan-EU EPA, in July, the fifth meeting of the Joint Committee established under the Japan-EU EPA was held between Foreign Minister

Kamikawa and Executive Vice President of the European Commission for an Economy that Works for People, and European Commissioner for Trade, Valdis Dombrovskis. Both sides confirmed progress in various fields, discussed responses to the EU's introduction of advanced regulations, and ensured steady implementation and operation of the EPA through the various specialized committees and working groups. Separately from the EPA, as part of efforts to promote broader strategic cooperation with the EU, Foreign Minister Kamikawa, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry SAITO Ken, and Executive Vice President Dombrovskis held the fifth Japan-EU High-Level Economic Dialogue in May. They confirmed cooperation in the economic security field, the launch of the "Transparent, Resilient and Sustainable Supply Chain Initiative," and strengthening of the free trade system with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core among others. Going forward, Japan will continue to ensure the steady implementation of the Japan-EU EPA and promote cooperation with the EU, including the Japan-EU High-Level Economic Dialogue, with the aim of further developing Japan-EU economic relations.



Meeting between Prime Minister Kishida and President of the European Commission von der Leyen (September 23, New York, U.S.; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)



1st Japan-EU Foreign Ministerial Strategic Dialogue (November 1, Tokyo)

(2) United Kingdom

In April, the Safety of Rwanda bill submitted by the Sunak administration was enacted, enabling the transfer of asylum seekers to Rwanda. However, the European Court of Human Rights and the Supreme Court of the UK ruled this illegal, and the transfers were never carried out. In May, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak dissolved the House of Commons, and a general election for the House of Commons was held in July. The Labour Party, led by Keir Starmer won an outright majority, bringing about a change in government for the first time in 14 years. The Labour Party had pledged five missions (kickstart economic growth, make Britain a clean energy superpower, restore public safety, break down barriers to opportunity, and build a national health service fit for the future). Following the electoral defeat, Prime Minister Sunak resigned. That same month, the new administration abolished the plan to transfer asylum seekers to Rwanda. However, immigration remained a major domestic issue in the UK, and from late July to early August, riots broke out



Japan-UK Summit Meeting (November 18, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

in various locations, triggered by an incident involving the injury and death of children.

There was an active dialogue between the governments of Japan and the UK at various levels, including the summit and foreign minister levels. In February, Prime Minister Kishida received a courtesy call by the Japanese and British co-chairs and British members of the Japan-UK 21st Century Group. Prime Minister Kishida also held an informal talk with Prime Minister Sunak during the G7 Apulia Summit in June. Prime Minister Kishida held a telephone call in July with Prime Minister Starmer, followed by a meeting during the NATO Summit held that same month. In November, Prime Minister Ishiba held a meeting with Prime Minister Starmer during the G20 Rio Summit, during which the leaders announced the launch of the Japan-UK Economic 2+2 Ministers' Meeting ("Economic 2+2").

At the foreign minister level, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held meetings with Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs David Cameron during the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in February and the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in April. Foreign Minister Kamikawa also held a telephone call with Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs David Lammy in July as well as a meeting during the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings later that month. Foreign Minister Iwaya also held a telephone call with Secretary Lammy in October, and they met again in person during the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in November.

On the cultural front, effective April 1, the number of UK nationals eligible to participate in Japan's

Working Holiday Program (visa issuance quota) was increased from 1,000 to 6,000 per year. (Note: The number of Japanese nationals eligible to use the UK Youth Mobility Scheme (visa issuance quota) was increased from 1,500 to 6,000 per year effective January 31, 2024.) In addition, effective December 1, the maximum stay period for UK nationals participating in Japan's Working Holiday Program was extended from one year to two years. These developments are expected to further promote youth exchanges and mutual understanding between Japan and the UK.

(3) France

In January, Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne resigned, and Gabriel Attal was inaugurated as the new Prime Minister, becoming the youngest in the history of the Fifth Republic.

In May, deliberations were held in the National Assembly on a constitutional amendment regarding voting rights in local elections in New Caledonia, a French overseas territory. Pro-independence groups turned violent, and a state of emergency was declared across New Caledonia. President Macron then visited New Caledonia, and after holding discussions with both pro-independence and anti-independence groups, President Macron expressed his intention to pursue a "comprehensive agreement" through the restoration of public order, economic recovery, and political dialogue.

In June, President Macron dissolved the National Assembly, with the first round of voting held on June 30 and the second round on July 7. As a result, the left-wing coalition made significant gains and became the party with the most seats, while the ruling coalition suffered major losses and became the party with the second-largest number of seats. In response, Prime Minister Attal announced his resignation. Subsequent coordination over the nomination of a new prime minister led to President Macron appointing Michel Barnier, a former chief negotiator on Brexit and member of the right-wing Republicans Party rather than a candidate from the left-wing coalition, as the new Prime Minister on September 5. The new Barnier cabinet was then formed.

In addition, the Paris 2024 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games were held from July to September.

With respect to foreign affairs, France worked to

continue and strengthen its support for Ukraine in response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. In February, a France-Ukraine summit meeting was held, and the two countries signed a bilateral security agreement to ensure Ukraine's long-term security. In addition, during the same month, President Macron held an international conference on support for Ukraine, taking a leading role in international support for Ukraine. With regard to the situation in the Middle East, France has called for an immediate and sustained ceasefire in Gaza as well as the immediate release of the hostages and has been actively engaged in efforts toward resolving the situation. Since taking office, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Noël Barrot has made multiple visits to the Middle East. In October, under President Macron's initiative, France held an international conference on support for Lebanon, during which it announced 100 million euro in aid and the provision of 100 tons of humanitarian supplies to the country.

With regard to Japan-France relations, in February, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Rio de Janeiro to attend the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting and held a foreign ministers' meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Stéphane Séjourné. During the meeting, Foreign Minister Kamikawa expressed her hope to further advance Japan-France relations by following up on the Roadmap on Japan-France Cooperation under the "Exceptional Partnership" announced at the Japan-France Summit Meeting in December 2023. In February 2024, based on the Roadmap, the first Japan-France Economic Security Working Group was held in Paris, where the two sides exchanged views on key issues concerning economic security such as the protection of

critical and emerging technologies, strengthening the resilience of supply chains, responding to non-market measures and practices, and countering economic coercion. In May, Prime Minister Kishida visited Paris to attend the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting and held a Japan-France Summit Meeting with President Macron. In the meeting, the two leaders welcomed the multilayered developments of Japan-France cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and announced the launch of negotiations on the Japan-France Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA). Prime Minister Kishida also held an exchange of views with Prime Minister Attal during the visit. In the same month, Foreign Minister Kamikawa, who accompanied Prime Minister Kishida to France, held a Japan-France Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Séjourné. The two Ministers concurred to further deepen the historic friendly relations between Japan and France as "Exceptional Partners" across the fields of security, the economy, and culture.

In October, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone call with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Barrot. In November, Foreign Minister Iwaya visited Italy to attend the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting and held his first in-person Japan-France Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Barrot.

In December, Prime Minister Barnier invoked Article 49.3 of the French Constitution during the deliberations on the Social Security Financing Bill, part of the 2025 budget proposal. In response, the opposition submitted a no-confidence motion, which was passed. This resulted in the collapse of the Barnier cabinet. On December 13, President Macron appointed François Bayrou, leader of the Democratic Movement, as the new Prime Minister.

(4) Germany

The administration of Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democratic Party (SPD)) faced internal policy conflicts within the coalition, including over fiscal policy, and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) withdrew from the government in November. As a result, the so-called "traffic light coalition" composed of the SPD, the Green Party, and the FDP collapsed, and the government was forced to operate as a two-party



Japan-France Summit Meeting (May 2, Paris, France; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

minority administration composed of the SPD and the Green Party for the time being. Seeking cooperation from the largest opposition party, the Christian Democratic Union of Germany and Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CDU/CSU, conservative), with the goal of passing legislation and the budget bill by the end of the Bundestag parliamentary session in December, Chancellor Scholz expressed his intention to dissolve the Bundestag after the passage of the 2025 budget bill and other related legislation, and to move up the next federal election, which was originally scheduled for September 2025. Subsequently, after consultations between the ruling and opposition parties, it was agreed that the early election would be held on February 23, 2025. The movements of each party ahead of the early federal election are drawing attention amid rising support for the right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD), which advocates for strict immigration policies, and expanded its influence in the June European Parliament election as well as in the September state elections in two states that were formerly part of East Germany.

Regarding diplomatic policy, Germany continued to work intensively to respond to the situation in Ukraine, including holding the Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC) in June. With regard to the Israel-Palestine situation, Chancellor Scholz and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Annalena Baerbock visited Israel to express solidarity with the country, while also calling for improvements in the humanitarian situation in the Gaza and taking steps to ease tensions. In the area of security, as part of efforts to implement the Policy Guidelines for the Indo-Pacific formulated by the Government of Germany in 2020, Germany strengthened its engagement in the region under the Indo-Pacific Deployment 2024, including port calls in Tokyo in August by the frigate *Baden-Württemberg* and the replenishment ship *Frankfurt am Main*.

With regard to Japan-Germany relations, Germany is an important partner that shares common values and principles, and high-level exchanges continue to take place actively. In July, Prime Minister Kishida visited Berlin and held a Japan-Germany Summit Meeting, during which both sides welcomed the progress in bilateral security cooperation in recent years, particularly as Germany strengthens its engagement in the

Indo-Pacific region. In the same month, the Japan-Germany Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) entered into force, establishing a framework for settlement procedures for the reciprocal provision of supplies and services between the Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Germany. The ACSA is expected to promote closer cooperation between the SDF and the German Armed Forces, and enable Japan and Germany to actively contribute to peace and security of the international community. In addition, bilateral cooperation in the increasingly important field of economic security has advanced in recent years. In November, the first meeting of the Japan-Germany Economic Security Consultations took place in Berlin. Moreover, 2024 marked the 50th anniversary of the Agreement between Japan and Germany on Cooperation in the field of Science and Technology, and a commemorative Jubilee was held in Kyoto in October.

(5) Italy

The administration of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has maintained a cooperative policy with Europe and the U.S. on the diplomatic and economic fronts. In the European Parliament elections held in June, the right-wing party Brothers of Italy (European Conservatives and Reformists), led by Prime Minister Meloni, secured 28.8% of the vote, strongly defending its position as the leading party in Italy. In terms of domestic affairs, illegal immigration countermeasures and responses to the declining birthrate and aging population remain ongoing issues. While working to curb unauthorized immigration, the Government of Italy also responded to domestic labor shortages by expanding the quota for legal entries from outside the EU to 452,000 in July 2023. (Note: The quota was 83,000 in 2022.)

As for Japan-Italy relations, as Italy succeeded Japan as the G7 Presidency, dialogue and mutual visits between the two countries became even more active at various levels, including at the summit and foreign minister levels. During Prime Minister Meloni's visit to Japan in February, the two sides confirmed cooperation in the field of security, as seen in the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP), joint naval exercises, and port calls by naval vessels, including those of aircraft carrier strike group (CSG). At the G7 Apulia Summit in June,



Japan-Italy Summit Meeting (February 5, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Meloni held an informal talk and announced the launch of the Japan-Italy Action Plan as well as the start of negotiations on the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA).

Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Antonio Tajani, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, held telephone calls in January, April, and June, confirming that the two countries would closely cooperate under Italy's G7 Presidency. August saw the entry into force of the Japan-Italy Film Co-production Agreement, which had been signed the previous year by then Foreign Minister Hayashi and Minister of Culture Gennaro Sangiuliano.

In the field of security, from August 2 to 5, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) Training Squadron *Kashima* and *Shimakaze* made a port call in Naples and conducted a Japan-Italy goodwill exercise with the Italian Navy frigate *Margottini* in the Aegean Sea. From August 6 to 8, Italian Air Force fighter jets visited Japan and participated in the Japan-U.S.-Italy joint exercise "Rising Sun 24" at Misawa Air Base. In late August, an Italian CSG made a port call in Japan, consisting of the light aircraft carrier *Cavour*, the frigate *Alpino*, and the patrol vessel *Montecuccoli*, which participated in the joint exercise "Noble Raven 24-3" with Japan, Australia, Italy, Germany, and France in the area from south of the Kanto region to east of Okinawa. During the same period, the Italian Navy training ship *Amerigo Vespucci* made its first-ever port call in Tokyo, and Minister of Defence Guido Crosetto visited Japan in conjunction with the ship's port call.

In November, Foreign Minister Iwaya visited Fiuggi,

Italy, to attend the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting. While in Rome, he met with Minister of Defense Crosetto, and the two Ministers signed the Japan-Italy ACSA.

(6) Spain

In November 2023, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez was reappointed as Prime Minister following a successful vote of confidence in the lower house of parliament with the support of left-wing parties, including regionalist parties from Catalonia and the Basque Country. (This marked the launch of the third Sánchez administration.) Spain's domestic economy recorded a growth rate exceeding that of the EU (Spain had a 2.5% growth rate in 2023 compared to the EU average of 0.4%), supported by the recovery of the tourism sector and a decline in electricity prices. However, Spain continues to face challenges such as a high unemployment rate and fiscal stabilization, even within the EU framework.

With 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, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge, who was attending the Third EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum in Belgium, held a meeting with Diego Martínez Belío, State Secretary for Foreign and Global Affairs for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation. Both sides welcomed the progress of bilateral cooperation in fields such as security, defense, and the economy, and confirmed they would further promote such cooperation. In July, Minister of Economy, Trade and Enterprise Carlos Cuerpo visited Japan and exchanged views on bilateral business opportunities.

In addition, there was progress in cooperation both in the public and private sectors, including the 24th Japan-Spain Symposium held in Takamatsu City, Kagawa Prefecture in October. In the economic field, progress was also seen in bilateral cooperation in the renewable energy sector, such as in offshore wind power generation.

Bilateral defense cooperation also steadily progressed. In July, Eurofighter aircraft from the Spanish Air Force visited Japan, and in August, the JMSDF Training Squadron made its first-ever port call in Valencia.

(7) Poland

Poland, as Ukraine's neighbor, has actively responded since the start of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, playing a major role as a hub of support to Ukraine. Poland has been accepting many Ukrainian evacuees, and Japan has been providing support to Poland in light of the increasing burden and vulnerability it faces. In addition, in December, in order to contribute to the stabilization of living conditions and the securing of educational opportunities for Ukrainian children continuing to live as evacuees in Poland, Japan decided to provide language therapy equipment to the Wrocław Psychological and Educational Center through Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects.

With regard to Japan-Poland relations, there were frequent high-level mutual visits. In January, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Poland, where she paid a courtesy call on President Andrzej Duda, held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski, and exchanged views with Minister of Education Barbara Nowacka. Foreign Minister Kamikawa also visited the Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology, an institution that Japan supported in its establishment. Foreign Minister Kamikawa exchanged views with Polish and Ukrainian students studying at the university, as well as with Ukrainian evacuees residing in Poland. In addition, Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sikorski held a telephone call in July. After the inauguration of the Ishiba administration, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone call with Minister of Foreign Affairs Sikorski in November.

In addition, in July, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology MORIYAMA Masahito visited Poland and held a meeting with Minister of Education Nowacka. In August, Minister of Justice KOIZUMI Ryuji visited Poland and held meetings with Minister of Justice Adam Bodnar and Minister of the Interior and Administration Tomasz Siemoniak. In the same month, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Władysław Teofil Bartoszewski visited Japan and held a meeting with Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs FUKAZAWA Yoichi.

(8) Ukraine

Based on the strong recognition that Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which began in February 2022 is an

outrageous act that shakes the very foundations of the international order, Japan has consistently and strongly promoted support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia since the beginning of the aggression. In 2024 as well, Japan had advanced efforts toward realizing a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, through high-level visits to Ukraine by Japanese dignitaries and cooperation with other countries in various international fora, such as the G7.

On January 7, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Ukraine and paid courtesy calls on President Zelenskyy and Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, and also held a meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba. Foreign Minister Kamikawa conveyed Japan's intention to continue its strong support for Ukraine and exchanged views on directions for cooperation toward recovery and reconstruction. Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited a support facility for women and children established by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), exchanged views with representatives of international organizations stationed in Ukraine among others, and stated that Japan would continue its support so that the people of Ukraine can regain a sense of safety and security in their lives.

On February 19, the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction was held in Tokyo with the participation of Prime Minister Shmyhal in order to provide strong, unified public-private sector support for Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction by leveraging knowledge derived from Japan's postwar and disaster reconstruction efforts, as well as advanced technology and knowhow from the private sector. During the conference, Prime Minister Kishida stated that support for Ukraine is an "investment for the future" of Ukraine, Japan, and the world, and noted that Ukraine's recovery and revitalization facing Russian aggression is in the interest of the entire international community.

Moreover, during the Japan-Ukraine Summit telephone call held on April 3, Prime Minister Kishida stated that the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction had been held successfully and expressed his hope to steadily implement the deliverables of the conference.

On February 25, marking two years since the start of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the G7 Leaders'

Video Conference was convened under Italy's G7 Presidency, with Prime Minister Kishida in attendance. President Zelenskyy participated at the beginning of the conference, and following the conference, a G7 Leaders' Statement was issued expressing the G7's unwavering support for Ukraine.

On April 18, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a Japan-Ukraine Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Foreign Minister Kuleba on the occasion of the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Foreign Minister Kamikawa emphasized that Japan would continue to demonstrate, at every opportunity, that Japan's unity in support for Ukraine is unwavering.

At the G7 Apulia Summit held from June 13 to 15, the situation in Ukraine was among the topics discussed. Prime Minister Kishida, noting the importance of the G7 continuing to stand united in support of Ukraine, stated that Japan would strongly promote support for Ukraine, especially in reconstruction with a medium- to long-term perspective. During the Summit, Prime Minister Kishida also held a meeting with President Zelenskyy and signed the Accord on Support for Ukraine and Cooperation between the Government of Japan and Ukraine, a bilateral document based on the Joint Declaration of Support for Ukraine issued during the NATO Summit in July 2023. This was the first such bilateral document signed by a non-Atlantic country, underscoring that the issue of Ukraine is not merely a European matter, but one that concerns the entire international community.

On June 15, Prime Minister Kishida attended the Summit on Peace in Ukraine held by the Government of Switzerland. He welcomed that this summit took place following the discussions held at the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May of the previous year. He emphasized that peace in Ukraine should be a "just and lasting peace" based on international law, including the United Nations (UN) Charter, and should not be the one that justifies unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion as well as achieving a "just and lasting peace" in Ukraine is symbolically important in leading the entire international community toward a world of cooperation, not that of division and confrontation.

On June 11 and 12, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa attended the Ukraine

Recovery Conference, which was co-hosted by the Government of Germany and the Government of Ukraine. He mentioned the steady progress in follow-up efforts stemming from the outcomes of the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction held in February, and expressed Japan's continued commitment to support Ukraine through unified public-private sector effort.

On July 11, during his attendance at the NATO Summit held in Washington, D.C., U.S., Prime Minister Kishida participated in the Japan-Australia-New Zealand-ROK (IP4) + Ukraine Leaders' Meeting, with the participation of President Zelenskyy. Prime Minister Kishida stated that this meeting was meaningful in that it demonstrated that Ukraine is an issue not only for Europe but also for the entire international community, including the Indo-Pacific. The leaders of the countries concurred on continued cooperation between the IP4 countries and Ukraine. On the same day, Prime Minister Kishida also attended the ceremony for issuing the Ukraine Compact and expressed unwavering commitment to continuing strong support



Courtesy call by Foreign Minister Iwaya on President Zelenskyy of Ukraine (November 16, Kyiv, Ukraine)



Japan-Ukraine Foreign Ministers' Meeting (November 16, Kyiv, Ukraine)

for Ukraine based on the bilateral documents signed between each country and Ukraine.

On September 23, during the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Kishida held a summit meeting with President Zelenskyy. Prime Minister Kishida stated that two and a half years ago, when Russia's aggression began, he decided to firmly stand up against the outrage that shook the foundation of the international order with a strong sense of crisis that "Ukraine today may be East Asia tomorrow," and that Japan would continue to do its utmost to support Ukraine. On the same day, Foreign Minister Kamikawa, who was also attending the UN General Assembly, held a meeting with Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha.

On October 25, the G7 Leaders' Statement on Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration (ERA) Loans was issued. Under the ERA framework and as part of the approximately 50 billion U.S. dollars concurred upon by the G7, Japan announced that it would provide 471.9 billion Japanese yen, equivalent to approximately 3.3 billion U.S. dollars,⁽⁴⁾ in yen loans.

On November 16, Foreign Minister Iwaya visited Ukraine and conveyed to the Ukrainian side that under the newly formed Ishiba administration as well, Japan will never waver in its position of standing with Ukraine. Foreign Minister Iwaya also discussed the dispatch of soldiers from North Korea to Russia and concurred on strengthening cooperation during his courtesy call on President Zelenskyy and meeting with Foreign Minister Sybiha. Regarding the "Victory Plan" explained by President Zelenskyy, Foreign Minister Iwaya conveyed Japan's support for the earliest possible realization of a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, as stated in the "Victory Plan." In his courtesy call on Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, Foreign Minister Iwaya signed the Agreement on the Security of Information between

Japan and Ukraine, which will serve as the institutional basis for information sharing between the two governments. Furthermore, during his visit, Foreign Minister Iwaya held exchanges of views with First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy Yuliia Svyrydenko and other officials related to mine action, and attended the ceremony for Japan's provision of power-related equipment to Ukraine, expressing that Japan would continue to strongly promote support for Ukraine.

On November 16, just before the 1,000th day since the start of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the G7 leaders issued the G7 Leaders' Statement on Enduring support for Ukraine, expressing their determination to stand in solidarity in support of Ukraine's fight for sovereignty, freedom, independence, territorial integrity, and reconstruction.

On December 16, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy Svyrydenko, who visited Japan to attend the Ninth Japan-Ukraine Economic Joint Meeting, held meetings with Chief Cabinet Secretary Hayashi and Foreign Minister Iwaya. Foreign Minister Iwaya conveyed his expectations that Japanese companies' participation in the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine would make further progress through the Economic Joint Meeting, and that Japan would continue to support Ukraine.

On December 25, Prime Minister Ishiba held his first summit telephone call with President Zelenskyy. The two leaders exchanged views on the situation surrounding Ukraine, including the involvement of North Korean soldiers in combat. Prime Minister Ishiba expressed his intention to continue to cooperate with Ukraine to realize a just and lasting peace in Ukraine as soon as possible. The two leaders concurred that they would continue to work closely together.

⁽⁴⁾ The dollar-denominated equivalent amounts of each contribution are calculated based on the exchange rate released by the EU as of September 19.

COLUMN

A Transforming EU and the Advancement of the Japan-EU Security Partnership

Mission of Japan to the European Union

■ A Transforming EU

The European Union (EU) is currently undergoing a transformation from a mere economic union to a global security provider. One of the pillars of the foundation of the EU is the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which emphasizes the strengthening of international security and the promotion of universal values. In addition, the EU has developed the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Under the CSDP, recognizing that instability of the international environment outside the EU can lead to increased threats within the bloc, the EU has deployed numerous military and civilian missions beyond its borders as initiatives to promote international peace and security.

Furthermore, Russia's aggression against Ukraine has forced the EU to change even more as it confronts the reality of war once again in Europe. At the same time, new expectations are being placed on the EU's role. Given the investment gap in the defense industry following the end of the Cold War in Europe, the EU has formulated the European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS) and begun efforts to strengthen its defence industrial base. In July, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who was reappointed for a second term, called on EU member states to seize the opportunity to build a true defense union. The European Commission has also taken a new direction, including establishing a Commissioner responsible for Defence and Space, a position equivalent to that of a minister.

■ The Japan-EU Security and Defence Partnership

Against the above backdrop, the relationship between the EU and Japan, which continues to transform over time, is also moving toward a new stage. In 2024, amid growing recognition that the security of Europe and the Indo-Pacific is inseparable, the Japan-EU Security and Defence Partnership was announced. Utilizing the existing framework of cooperation, the partnership aims to further develop areas of cooperation and dialogue related to security and defense.

The areas of cooperation set out in this partnership are wide-ranging. They encompass not only traditional fields such as military and civilian missions, maritime security, disarmament and non-proliferation, and countering terrorism and violent extremism, but also non-traditional fields such as cyber, hybrid threats including Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI), and the defense industry, which is a priority for Europe. As the areas of cooperation expand, the challenges of the increasingly wide-ranging EU organizations involved have become more apparent. In addition to the European External Action Service (EEAS), which serves as the EU's foreign ministry, there is also the involvement of the European Council, alongside the European Commission and the EU member states. Moreover, in many cases, authority and financial resources for concrete cooperation are solely in the hands of the EU member states.

■ The diversity and complexity of the EU

The diversity of these areas of cooperation and the complexity of EU organizations present difficulties when considering or negotiating Japan-EU cooperation. However, they are also strengths unique to the EU, which has a deeply rooted multilayered bureaucracy based on the rule of law, the economic scale of its 27 EU member states, and a powerful single internal market. The Mission of Japan to the European Union, based in Brussels, Belgium - home to the EU headquarters - has established a Security and Defense Unit. The political and defense officials there work together to strengthen Japan-EU cooperation at the forefront. In addition, in the context of cyber, hybrid threats, and the defense industry, further inter-ministerial cooperation is also necessary. Going forward, Japan will continue to advance Japan-EU security and defense cooperation initiatives through a concerted national effort that spans multiple ministries, based in Brussels which is considered the heart of Europe.



Foreign Minister Iwama and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice-President of the European Commission Josep Borrell Fontelles announcing the Japan-EU Security and Defence Partnership (November 1, Iikura Guest House, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo)

COLUMN

Japan's Partner at the Center of Europe

— History and Future of 160 Years of Exchanges between Japan and Alsace

Consulate General of Japan in Strasbourg

From 2023 to 2024, Japan and Alsace in France celebrated the 160th anniversary of their exchanges. Alsace, which has a history of hardship as it swayed between French and German control, has now become a symbol of the reconciliation between France and Germany as well as European integration. This column introduces the long-standing exchanges between Alsace and Japan.

■ The Initial Encounter and the Legacy of Exchanges

The first encounter between Japan and Alsace dates back to the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate. In 1863, merchants from Osaka visited Mulhouse, a city with a developed textile industry, and commissioned the production of woolen fabrics featuring traditional Japanese patterns. The following year, the textiles from Mulhouse arrived in Japan, marking the beginning of exchanges. This coincided with the period of the rise of Japonisme in France, when Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints and distinct designs captured the French imagination.



Ginkgo trees in a square in Strasbourg

In the 1880s, Japanese exchange students began coming to the University of Strasbourg, which was then part of Germany, for scientific studies. Around 1900, it is also said that Emperor Meiji gifted ginkgo trees to German Kaiser Wilhelm II, and these trees still stand beautifully in a square in the city of Strasbourg today.

The next major leap in Japan-Alsace exchanges came in the 1980s. At the time, local people in Alsace actively sought to attract Japanese companies spreading over Europe, resulting in a major Japanese electronics manufacturer expanding into the region in 1986. This sparked a wave of Japanese companies setting up operations in the Colmar area. As a result, the number of Japanese companies and residents in the region increased, leading to the opening of the Japanese school “Lycée Seijo d’Alsace” in 1986 and the establishment of the Consulate General of Japan in Strasbourg in 1992. André Klein,

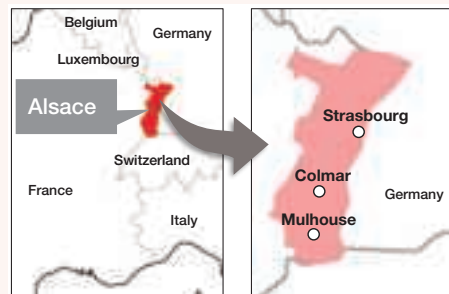
who led these efforts, placed importance on not just attracting Japanese companies but also deepening economic and cultural exchanges in a dual approach. His strong conviction ultimately led to the founding of the Centre Européen d’Etudes Japonaises d’Alsace (CEEJA) in 2001. CEEJA continues to play a key role in fostering Japan-Alsace exchanges today.

In the academic sphere, the Department of Japanese Studies was established at the University of Strasbourg in 1986. In 2001, the Maison Universitaire France-Japon and the Strasbourg Office of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) were successively established. Today, the University of Strasbourg has agreements with around 30 Japanese universities, and inter-university exchanges are thriving.

■ Journey Toward the Future

As a concluding event for the 160th anniversary, the “JapanWeek” was held in November 2024 in Colmar to showcase Japanese culture. Over the course of a week, many people from both France and Japan enjoyed cultural exchanges through Japanese culture.

Looking ahead, Alsace wine will be served at the France Pavilion of the 2025 World Exposition (Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan) and the opening of the “Musée Européen du Manga et de l’Anime” is planned for Colmar in 2027. Exchanges between Japan and Alsace are expected to further deepen in a wide range of fields, including the economy, culture, and academia. In every era, such exchanges are supported by the efforts and dedication of the people involved. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will continue to support the development of these exchanges.



A performance held during the “JapanWeek” (November, Colmar, France)

3 Collaboration with Regional Institutions

(1) Cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

NATO is an organization that aims to ensure the freedom and security of its member countries through political and military means, including collective defense, based on the North Atlantic Treaty. In addition to “deterrence and defense” of its member countries, NATO engages in “crisis prevention and management” beyond its borders, such as peacekeeping activities and counter-terrorism efforts, in response to crises that could pose direct security threats to its member countries, and “cooperative security” through collaboration with partner countries and institutions. In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, NATO adopted a new “Strategic Concept” in 2022, which presented guidelines for enhancing dialogue and cooperation with partners in the Indo-Pacific. Amid NATO's growing interest in the Indo-Pacific, cooperation between Japan and NATO has become even more important based on the recognition that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable.

The Indo-Pacific partners (IP4: Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea (ROK)) were invited for the first time to the NATO Summit and Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in 2022. In April 2024, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUJI Kiyoto attended the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and in July, Prime Minister Kishida participated in the NATO Summit for the third consecutive year on behalf of Japan. At

the Summit, it was announced that in order to establish lasting cooperation between the IP4 and NATO, flagship projects would be pursued in four areas: (a) support to Ukraine, (b) cyber defense, (c) hostile information, including disinformation, and (d) technology. In the meeting held between Prime Minister Kishida and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, both leaders welcomed the flagship projects. In September, during the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg, in which the leaders concurred on continuing to cooperate toward the further development of the Japan-NATO relationship. In October, the defense ministers of the IP4 were invited for the first time to the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Defence. Defense Minister NAKATANI Gen attended on behalf of Japan and held a meeting with the newly appointed NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, who assumed his position on October 1.

(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 participating 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 enhance 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



Joint Press Occasion between Prime Minister Kishida and NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg at the NATO Summit (July 11, Washington, D.C., U.S.; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

intermittently since August 2015, and dispatches ended in February 2022). Additionally, in October 2024, Japan co-hosted the OSCE Asian Conference in Vienna as the chair country of the Asian partners for co-operation. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge attended the conference and spoke on the importance of strengthening cooperation between OSCE participating countries and the Asian partner countries.

Japan has been attending the OSCE Ministerial Council every year. State Minister for Foreign Affairs FUJII Hisayuki participated in the council held in December in Malta. At the council, he stated that Japan will further strengthen cooperation with the OSCE, which addresses 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. In September, Alain Berset assumed the position of Secretary General of the CoE. 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. Japan also participates as an Associate Member in the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, a mechanism established to record damage caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine. In addition, in November, Japan also made a policy statement at the World Forum for Democracy. Moreover, in May, the Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAI), in which Japan participates as an observer, adopted the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, the first international legally binding instrument on AI.

(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 (a) politics, (b) economy, and (c) society and culture.

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) is ASEM's only permanent institution. It is located in Singapore 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, from February to September, on-site surveys were conducted in four countries (Indonesia, Thailand, Kazakhstan, and Sweden) under the joint project between ASEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) entitled "Addressing antimicrobial resistance (AMR) by strengthening primary health care (PHC): Piloting the WHO AMR People-Centred Approach in priority countries." In November, the "High-level Meeting on Risk Communication for Public Health Emergencies" was held in Singapore. As part of ASEF's "Project for Strengthening Preparedness and Response to the COVID-19 and other Emerging Infectious Diseases" with financial contributions by Japan, Japan has supported the stockpiling initiative conducted by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in several Asian countries (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and the Philippines). In addition, Japan decided to provide financial support through WHO for infectious disease countermeasures for Ukrainian displaced persons, to be provided to Ukraine and its neighboring countries that accept Ukrainian displaced persons (ASEM partner countries: Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Bulgaria, non-ASEM partner country: 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.

COLUMN

Japan's Support for Ukrainian Displaced Persons in Romania

— The Japanese Embassy as a Bridge of Support

Embassy of Japan in Romania

Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which began in February 2022, continues to have a significant impact on neighboring countries.

Since the onset of the aggression, a cumulative total of approximately 10.5 million Ukrainians (as of November 2024) have entered Romania, which shares a border with Ukraine. The Government of Romania has provided temporary protection measures to approximately 170,000 Ukrainians. In addition, despite having limited prior experience in receiving displaced persons, the Government of Romania has worked on various support efforts in cooperation with international organizations and NGOs, including facilitating access to healthcare, providing educational opportunities for children, and helping with integration into Romanian society. Even now, nearly 1,000 days since the aggression began, approximately 80,000 Ukrainians continue to live as displaced persons in Romania. In this regard, Romania can be considered one of Ukraine's neighboring countries most heavily impacted by Russia's aggression.

The Government of Japan, through support to international organizations and Japanese NGOs, has been assisting not only Ukrainian displaced persons in Romania but also the host communities within Romania that support them.

The Embassy of Japan in Romania supports the activities carried out by international organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which are implemented with funding from the Government of Japan, as well as initiatives to support Ukrainian displaced persons by Japanese NGOs including Good Neighbors Japan, Save the Children Japan, and Nippon International Cooperation for Community Development (NICCO). To bolster these efforts, the Embassy visits the sites of support activities, identifies how Japan's support is being utilized and any challenges, leverages this information for future support, and actively communicates to the public, thereby working to make Japan's support more visible.

To help Ukrainian displaced persons living in Romania regain their peaceful daily lives as soon as possible, the Embassy of Japan in Romania will continue to actively work as a bridge connecting various Romanian support organizations with Japanese society, thereby contributing to the support of both Ukrainian displaced persons and host communities.



Vice President of the House of Councillors NAGAHAMA Hiroyuki (foreground left) and others receive an explanation from Pablo Zapata, the Acting representative of UNHCR Romania, on how Japan's support is being used at a Ukrainian displaced persons support center (September 4, Bucharest, Romania; Photo: UNHCR Romania)

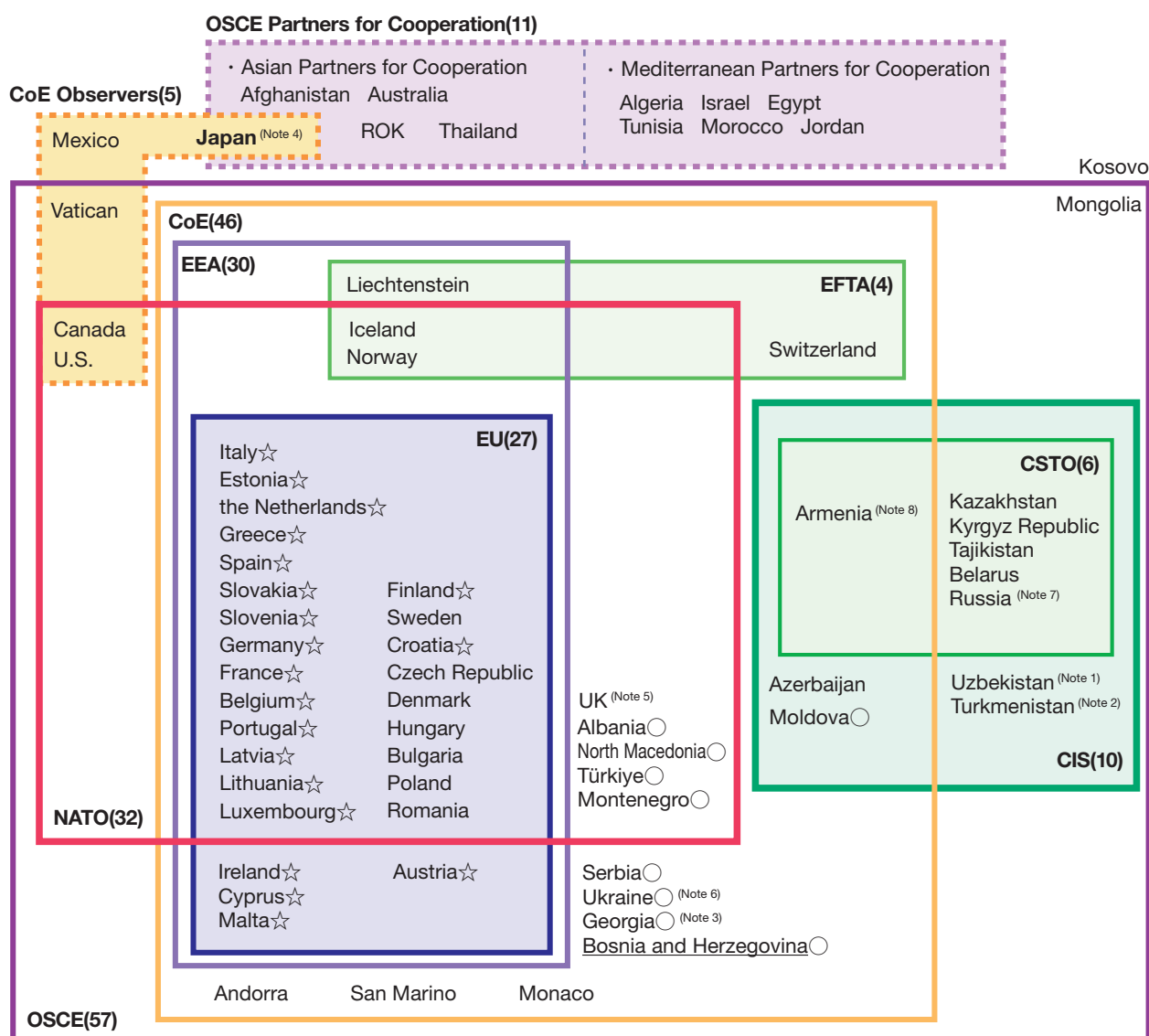


Ambassador of Japan to Romania Katae visits an educational facility for Ukrainian children supported by UNICEF Romania, guided by Representative Anna Riatti (May 20, Bucharest, Romania; Photo: UNICEF Romania)



Ambassador Katae exchanges views with parents at an educational facility for Ukrainian children supported by Save the Children Japan (April 22, Năvodari, Romania)

Major Frameworks of Europe



() Indicates number of member countries

<Legend>

○ : Candidate to be an EU member

☆ : Euro member states

— : Member states of the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP)

(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.

(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

(Note 8) In February 2024, Armenia announced the suspension of its participation in the CSTO.

<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: On November 30, a general parliamentary election was held. The Social Democratic Alliance became the largest party, and Kristrún Frostadóttir was appointed as Prime Minister.

Sweden: In January, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Stockholm and held a meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs Tobias Billström. In July, Prime Minister Kishida, during his visit to the U.S. to attend the NATO Summit, held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, and both leaders concurred on further strengthening bilateral cooperation in all areas, including security.

Denmark: In July, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji held a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Industry and Trade of the Faroe Islands, Høgni Hoydal, who was visiting Japan. In October, a delegation from the Foreign Policy Committee of the Danish Parliament visited Japan and paid a courtesy call on Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa.

Norway: In July, during her visit to Laos to attend the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Espen Barth Eide.

Finland: In January, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Helsinki and held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Elina Valtonen. In July, during his visit to the U.S. to attend the NATO Summit, Prime Minister Kishida held a meeting with President Alexander Stubb, and both leaders concurred on further strengthening bilateral cooperation in all areas, including security and the economy. In December, Prime Minister Ishiba held a meeting with Prime Minister Petteri Orpo, who was visiting Japan, and announced the commencement of negotiations on the Agreement concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology.

Benelux countries

The Netherlands: In January, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited the Netherlands, paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Mark Rutte, and held a Japan-Netherlands Foreign Ministers' Meeting, during which both sides shared the recognition that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable. In July, Prime Minister Kishida held his first summit meeting with Prime Minister Dick Schoof during the NATO Summit in the U.S.. Prime Minister Kishida welcomed the Netherlands' concrete engagement in the Indo-Pacific region, including the dispatch of the frigate *HNLMS Tromp* to Japan, and confirmed that they would continue working together in all areas, including security. In September, the Japan-Netherlands Peace Exchange Program was held, and five Dutch civilians who had been interned by the Japanese military during World War II were invited to visit Japan.

Belgium: In May, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a telephone call with Minister of Foreign Affairs Hadja Lahbib, during which both sides concurred on strengthening Japan-Belgium bilateral relations and cooperation toward Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, and the 160 Years of Friendship between Japan and Belgium in 2026. The two ministers also exchanged views on regional affairs and concurred on working together.

Luxembourg: In January, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a meeting in Tokyo with Vice Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, and Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs, Xavier Bettel, who was visiting Japan. The two ministers shared the view that the close relationship between the Imperial Household and the Grand Ducal Household is the cornerstone of excellent bilateral relations and concurred on further deepening friendly bilateral relations. Prior to the meeting, the two ministers exchanged notes verbales concerning the introduction of the Japan-Luxembourg Working Holiday Programme. In June, the Luxembourg Economic Mission led by Crown Prince Guillaume of Luxembourg visited Japan and held meetings with Prime Minister Kishida and Foreign Minister Kamikawa. Prior to the meeting between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Crown Prince Guillaume, a signing ceremony was held for the Japan-Luxembourg Air Services Agreement and the Memorandum of Cooperation between relevant ministries and agencies in the field of Space Activities for Peaceful Purposes.

Baltic countries

Estonia: In March, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Margus Tsahkna, who was visiting Japan as a guest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In July, Prime Minister Kaja Kallas stepped down from her position as Prime Minister after being nominated to become EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, and the new administration led by Prime Minister Kristen Michal was inaugurated.

Latvia: In February, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a foreign ministers' meeting and another meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs Krišjānis Karinš, who was visiting Japan as a guest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Lithuania: In May, a presidential election was held, and incumbent President Gitanas Nausėda was re-elected after a runoff with Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė.

Ireland: On November 29, a general election was held, and Fianna Fáil – The Republican Party became the party with the most seats. On January 23, Micheál Martin was appointed as Prime Minister by the lower house of Ireland's parliament.

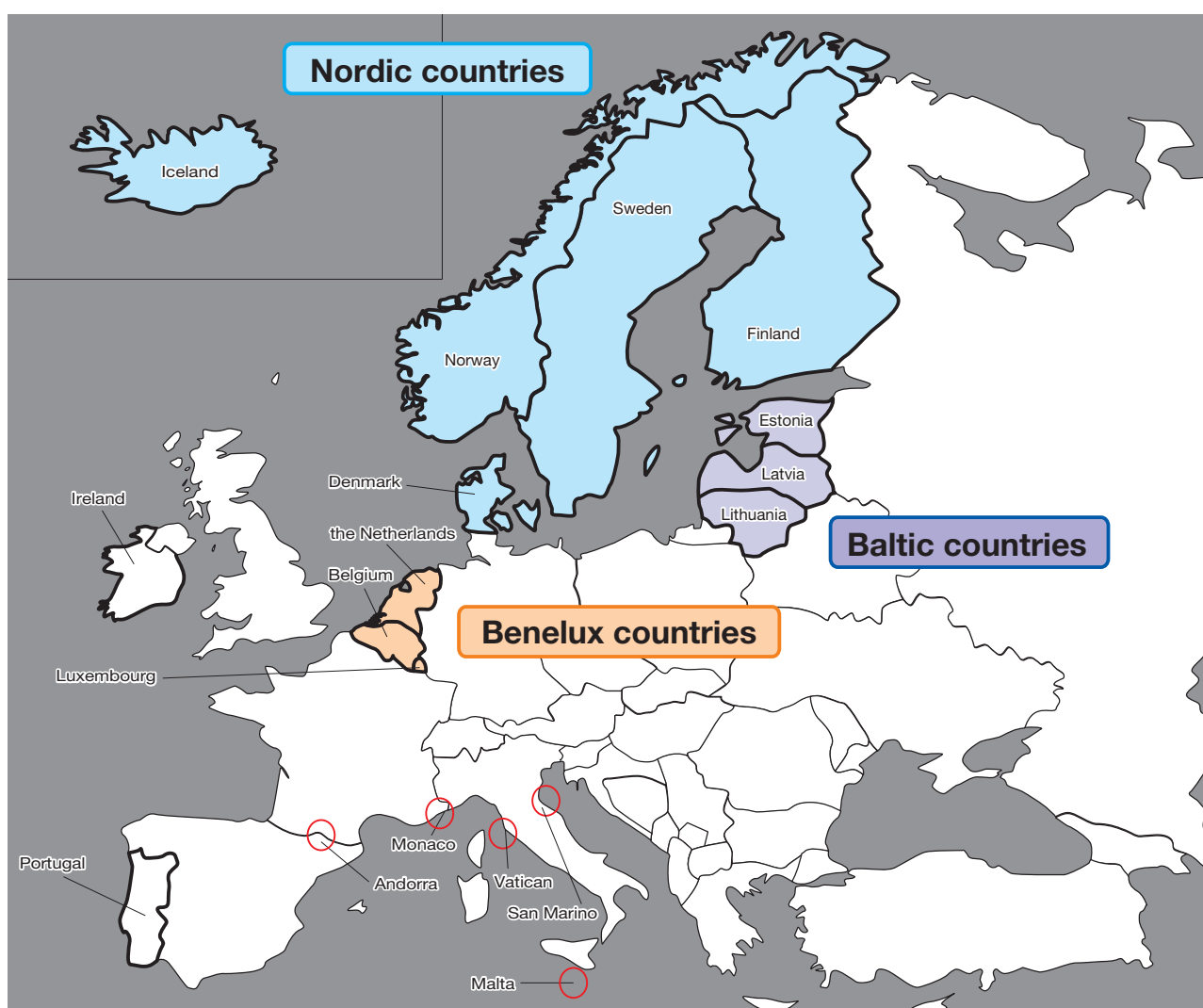
San Marino: As Heads of State of San Marino, Alessandro Rossi and Milena Gasperoni took office in April, followed by Captains Regent, Francesca Civerchia and Dalibor Riccardi in October. In June, a general election for the Grand and General Council of San Marino was held, and in July, the second Beccari administration was inaugurated under Minister of Foreign Affairs, Political Affairs, International Economic Cooperation and Digital Transition Luca Beccari.

The Vatican: In December, Archbishop of Tokyo Tarcisius KIKUCHI Isao was appointed Cardinal by Pope Francis. (Cardinals are ranked just below the Pope and have the right to vote in papal conclaves. There are now two incumbent Japanese Cardinals, including Cardinal Thomas Aquinas Manyo Maeda, Archbishop of Osaka-Takamatsu.)

Portugal: On March 10, a general election for the Assembly of the Republic was held, in which the opposition Democratic Alliance (AD), led by the Social Democratic Party (PSD), narrowly defeated the ruling Socialist Party (PS). PSD leader Luís Montenegro became Prime Minister.

Malta: On January 1, the Embassy of Japan in Malta was opened. In February, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa visited Malta and paid courtesy calls on Deputy Prime Minister Chris Fearn and Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation Clifton Grima. Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa also held a meeting with Permanent Secretary Christopher Cutajar of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism. The two sides confirmed further progress in bilateral relations toward the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Malta in 2025. With Permanent Secretary Cutajar, a memorandum of cooperation on people-to-people exchanges was signed with the aim of accelerating bilateral coordination toward the introduction of a working holiday program. In December, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Fujii visited Malta to attend the 31st OSCE Ministerial Council, during which he paid a courtesy call on President Myriam Spiteri Debono of Malta and held a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism Ian Borg. Both sides concurred on continuing to closely cooperate to further develop bilateral relations.

Monaco: In Monaco, where interest in Japanese culture is growing, "Monaco-Japan Artistic Encounters" was held in November for the first time in four years since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In September, Didier Guillaume was newly appointed as Minister of State (equivalent to Prime Minister).



V4

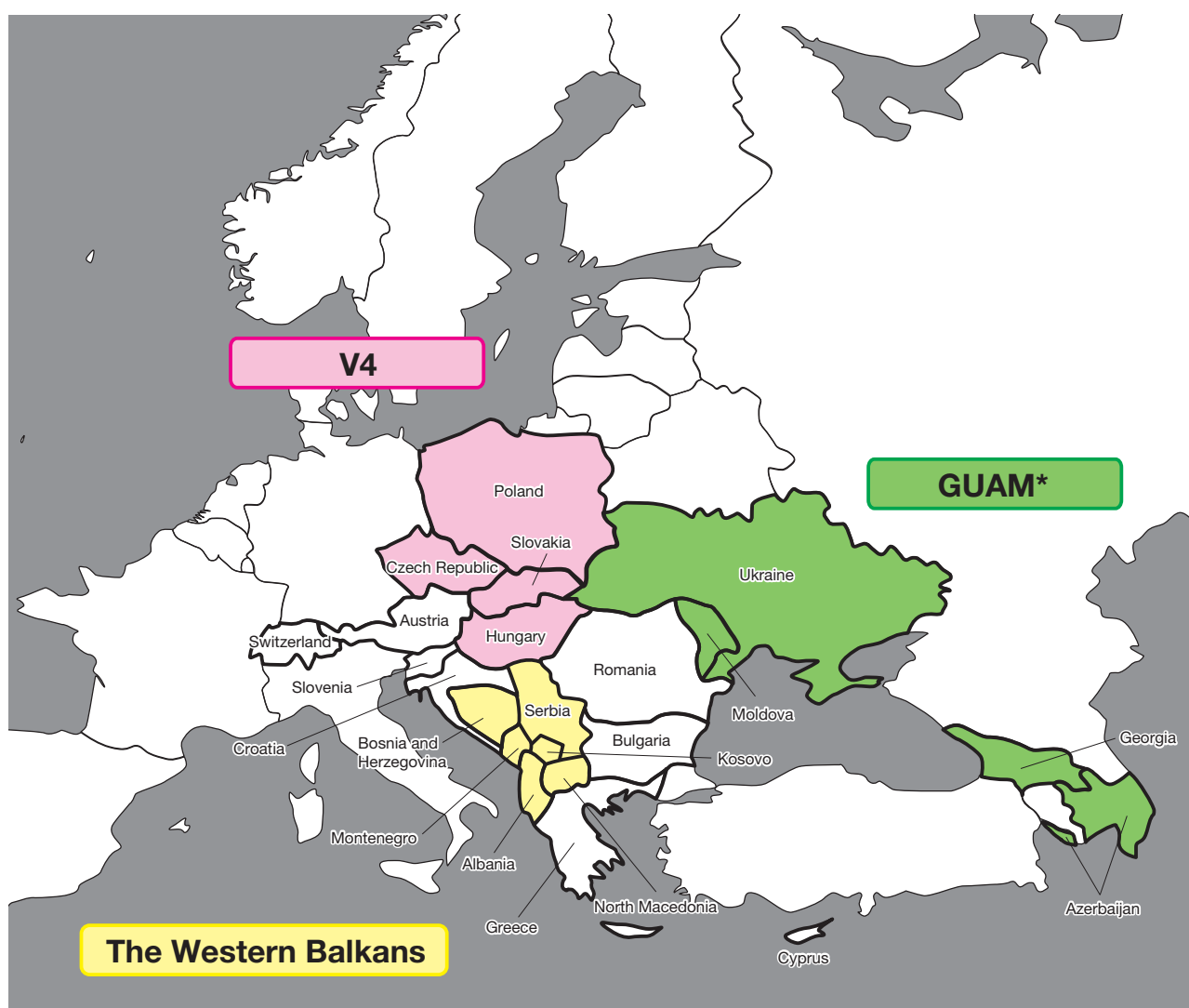
Bilateral relations between Japan and the V4 countries of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary have a long history and are traditionally friendly. Cooperation with the V4, which are neighboring countries of Ukraine, is important for Japan as it continues to support Ukraine. Through the "V4+Japan" cooperation framework, Japan has collaborated with the V4 in a wide range of fields.

Slovakia: There were exchanges at various levels between Japan and Slovakia. In February, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge held a meeting in Brussels with State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs Marek Eštok. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy Denisa Saková as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment Tomáš Taraba also visited Japan. In September, Vice President of the House of Councillors NAGAHAMA Hiroyuki visited Slovakia and held a meeting with Chairman Marián Kéry of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Council.

Czech Republic (V4 Chair until June): In February, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge exchanged views with Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Lipavský in Brussels. Later in the same month, Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Foreign Minister Lipavský held a foreign ministers' meeting in Tokyo, during which they signed the Japan-Czech Republic Air Services Agreement.

Poland: * See 2 (7) Poland.

Hungary: In May, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a foreign ministers' meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó, who was visiting Japan for the second consecutive year.



* GUAM: GUAM (acronym for Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) was established by four countries of the former Soviet Union to promote democracy and stable economic development. Japan established the "GUAM+Japan" cooperation framework in 2007, and has held foreign minister-level and vice-minister-level meetings, as well as theme-based workshops with professionals and experts from GUAM countries, as part of invitation programs to Japan.

The Western Balkans

In the Western Balkans region, despite ongoing concerns about peace implementation and ethnic conflicts, including the 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. In addition, under the “Western Balkans Cooperation Initiative”⁽⁵⁾ which Japan has led since 2018, Japan has been promoting support for economic reforms of Western Balkan countries aiming for EU membership and reconciliation and cooperation among the region's various ethnic groups through the promotion of bilateral dialogues with each Western Balkan country as part of bilateral cooperation; development cooperation through Official Development Assistance (ODA); programs that facilitate expansion by Japanese companies as well as sharing knowledge and inviting personnel to Japan to address common regional challenges as part of regional cooperation promotion and cooperation with third-party countries. As part of the invitation programs, in November, practitioners from the Western Balkans and Greece were invited to Japan under the theme of tourism. In December, under the MIRAI program, an exchange program with Europe, youth were invited to Japan under the theme of peacebuilding (in cooperation with the Regional Youth Cooperation Office of the Western Balkans). In February, the third Bulgaria-Japan-Western Balkans Workshop “Improving Disaster Risk Management Understanding” was held.

Albania: In July, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa visited Albania and held a meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Igli Hasani. Also in July, a delegation from the House of Representatives conducting a study on diplomacy and political/economic conditions in European countries visited Albania and paid courtesy calls on Prime Minister Edi Rama and others.

North Macedonia: In March, the leaders and foreign ministers of Japan and North Macedonia exchanged commemorative messages to mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and North Macedonia. In October, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge met with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Zoran Dimitrovski during the OSCE Asian Conference held in Austria.

Kosovo: In April, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora Donika Gërvalla visited Japan and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Kamikawa. In July, Foreign Minister Kamikawa became the first Japanese foreign minister to visit Kosovo, where she paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Albin Kurti and held a meeting with Minister Gërvalla. To mark the 15th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Kosovo, commemorative events were held in both countries.

Serbia: In April, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs HOSAKA Yasushi visited Serbia and paid a courtesy call on First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić. In July, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Serbia and held a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Marko Đurić, in which the two ministers concurred on launching negotiations for a Japan-Serbia bilateral investment treaty. Foreign Minister Kamikawa also paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Miloš Vučević, and held an exchange of views with Tatjana Macura, Minister without portfolio in charge of gender equality, prevention of violence against women and economic and political empowerment of women.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: In July, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Bosnia and Herzegovina and held meetings with Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmedin Konaković, Chairwoman of the Council of Ministers Borjana Krišto, and High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina Christian Schmidt.

Slovenia: In April, Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Tanja Fajon, who was visiting Japan.

Romania: In March, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a telephone call with Minister of Foreign Affairs Luminița Teodora Odobescu. In September, Vice President of the House of Councillors Nagahama visited Romania and met with President of the Senate Nicolae Ciucă and Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu.

Bulgaria: In April, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Hosaka visited Bulgaria. In August, a delegation from the Japan-Bulgaria Parliamentary Friendship Association of the House of Councillors visited Bulgaria. In addition, in September, Speaker of the House of Representatives NUKAGA Fukushima visited Bulgaria and held meetings with National Assembly Chair Raya Nazaryan, President Rumen Radev, and Prime Minister Dimitar Glavchev.

Croatia: In June, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa met with Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Gordan Grlić Radman in Berlin. Later in the same month, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa visited Croatia and attended the Dubrovnik Forum.

Austria: In January, the Agreement between Japan and the Republic of Austria on Social Security, which had been under intergovernmental negotiations, was signed. In April, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a telephone call with Federal Minister for European and International Affairs Alexander Schallenberg. In October, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge visited Vienna to attend the OSCE Asian Conference and met with Secretary-General of the Ministry for European and International Affairs Nikolaus Marschik. In the same month, the 26th meeting of the Japan-Austria Committee for Issues of the Future was held in Graz, Austria, with a focus on hydrogen and AI.

Switzerland: In August, President Viola Amherd visited Japan, and both countries celebrated the 160th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Switzerland through a summit meeting and other events. In October, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge visited Switzerland to attend the Ukraine Mine Action Conference in Lausanne. State Minister Tsuge also held a meeting with Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Ignazio Cassis, in which both sides exchanged views on bilateral relations and regional affairs including Ukraine and concurred on strengthening cooperation as like-minded countries.

Greece: The year 2024 marked the 125th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Greece and was designated the “Year of Culture and Tourism Between Japan and Greece,” leading to increased exchanges between the two countries. (See the Column on page 147.) In July, a delegation from the House of Representatives, National Diet of Japan, conducting a study on diplomacy and political/economic conditions in European countries, visited Greece and engaged in inter-parliamentary exchanges, including a meeting with the Greece-Japan Parliamentary Friendship League. In December, the Tax Convention between Japan and the Hellenic Republic entered into force.

Moldova: In September, Foreign Minister Kamikawa participated in the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the Moldova Partnership Platform held in Chișinău by sending a written message. In November, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a foreign ministers' meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mihai Popșoi, who was visiting Japan, and stated that Japan would continue to support Moldova, which is affected by Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

(5) 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

Visit to the United Kingdom by Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan

Following a long-standing invitation, Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan visited the United Kingdom (UK) from June 22 to 29. The Japanese Imperial Family and the British Royal Family have shared ties over many years, and the governments and peoples of the two countries have conducted a wide variety of exchanges. Given these accumulated exchanges and the fact that the UK is fondly remembered by Their Majesties as the country where they studied abroad, the visit showed the deep friendship and goodwill between Japan and the UK, both domestically and internationally.

During the three-day period from June 25 to 27, Their Majesties were welcomed as State Guests. They attended a Ceremonial Welcome at Horse Guards Parade (the parade ground of the Household Cavalry), a luncheon held by His Majesty King Charles III at Buckingham Palace, and a State Banquet given by Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla. Along The Mall on the way from the Ceremonial Welcome to the luncheon, the flags of Japan and the UK were flown, and Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress received a grand welcome from the many people lining the route as they rode in a state carriage alongside Their Majesties the King and Queen. In his address at the banquet, His Majesty the Emperor stated, "It is my sincere hope that both Japan and the UK, as friends like no other, will continue to make untiring efforts for true mutual understanding through exchanges of their people, thereby building an enduring relationship based on friendship, goodwill and cooperation."

On June 28, Their Majesties visited Oxford. After visiting Balliol College, where Her Majesty the Empress once studied abroad, Their Majesties attended a luncheon held by the Chancellor of Oxford University, The Rt Hon the Lord Patten of Barnes. During his remarks at the luncheon, His Majesty the Emperor stated, "It is my wish that all the... students, academics and researchers from the United Kingdom and countries all over the world, including Japan, will continue to inspire and uplift each other, pointing the way towards a brighter future not just for our two countries but for the whole world." Following the luncheon, Her Majesty the Empress was awarded an honorary degree. Their Majesties also visited Merton College, where His Majesty the Emperor studied in the past, and planted cherry trees.

His Majesty the Emperor also attended a reception with members of the Japanese community and friends of Japan in the UK, where he met with individuals who have contributed to promoting the Japan-UK relationship. He also visited Japan House London and the Thames Barrier, one of the world's largest movable flood barriers. At the banquet held by the Lord Mayor of London and City of London Corporation on June 26, His Majesty shared stories from his time studying at Oxford University, when he conducted research on the history of water transport on the River Thames.

This visit marked the third official State Visit to the UK by Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress in the history of Japan-UK relations. Symbolizing the Japan-UK partnership, the visit further deepened the friendship, goodwill, and cooperative relations between the two countries.



His Majesty the Emperor and His Majesty the King at the State Banquet (June 25, Buckingham Palace, UK; Photo: British Royal Family)



Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress visiting Balliol College (June 28, Oxford, UK; Photo: Oxford University)

COLUMN

The 125th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Greece

— Strategic Partners Connected by the “Sea”



■ Japan-Greece Relations

Japan and Greece established diplomatic relations through the conclusion of the Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation in 1899. As nations that share fundamental values and engage in global maritime transport, Japan and Greece began exchanges through the “sea” and have built up friendly relations over many years in various fields. In recent years, mutual visits by dignitaries have become more frequent, and in-person Japan-Greece Foreign Ministers’ Meetings were held three times in 2018, 2019, and 2022. In 2023, 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 a joint statement to elevate Japan-Greece relations to a “strategic partnership.” In the economic field, the Tax Convention between Japan and the Hellenic Republic was signed in the same year. After ratification by both countries’ parliaments, the Tax Convention entered into force in December 2024. It is expected to further promote bilateral investment and economic exchange. In addition, as a member of both the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Greece also shares with Japan various common interests, including the maintenance and strengthening of the free and open international order based on the rule of law at sea. Japan-Greece relations are expected to continue developing not only in bilateral cooperation but also in the international arena.



Japan-Greece Summit Meeting (January 30, 2023, Prime Minister’s Office; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

■ The 125th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Greece: “Year of Culture and Tourism Between Japan and Greece”

Japan and Greece are both major global tourism nations with rich cultures. 2024 marked the 125th anniversary of the countries’ bilateral relations, and was designated as the “Year of Culture and Tourism Between Japan and Greece” (as agreed upon during the Japan-Greece Summit Meeting in January 2023). This led to an increase in bilateral exchanges. The visit to Greece by Her Imperial Highness Princess Kako of Akishino in May was a highlight of this commemorative year and served as a major opportunity to demonstrate the friendly relations between the two countries both domestically and internationally. Her Imperial Highness met with President Katerina Sakellariopoulou as well as Prime Minister Mitsotakis and his wife, and attended various events such as the “Commemorative Ceremony for the 125th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Greece and Year of Culture and Tourism Between Japan and Greece.”



President Sakellariopoulou and Her Imperial Highness Princess Kako of Akishino (May 28, Athens, Greece; Photo: Presidency of the Hellenic Republic)

As part of the commemorative events for the Year of Culture and Tourism, a variety of highly popular events were held in Greece, including *Noh* performances, lectures by renowned architects, film festivals, and events related to Japanese cuisine, anime, martial arts, traditional Japanese clothing, woodblock prints, and more. Many events were also held in Japan, including a celebration for the special binding edition publication of Greek literary master Nikos Kazantzakis’ *Travelling Japan*, which was held during the visit of Greek Minister of Tourism Olga Kefalogianni, a photo exhibition by a renowned photographer themed on Greece, and a diplomatic archives exhibition co-hosted with the Embassy of Greece in Japan at the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Through such a wide range of commemorative events in the fields of culture and tourism, the friendship between Japan and Greece has deepened further.

Japan, which faces the Pacific Ocean, and Greece, which is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea, are geographically distant. However, the relationship that has been cultivated through the “Year of Culture and Tourism Between Japan and Greece” serves as a solid foundation for the two countries to work closely together in the international community to address common challenges and further advance their relations.

Section

6

Russia and Belarus,
Central Asia and the Caucasus

1 Overview

Despite continued severe sanctions against Russia and strong support for Ukraine, mainly by the G7 and the European Union (EU) countries, an outrageous act of Russia's aggression against Ukraine (which Russia calls a "special military operation"), did not stop in 2024. While Ukraine advanced into Russia (Kursk Oblast) in August, Russia has meanwhile gradually expanded its occupied area of Ukrainian territory. Russia also continued its nuclear threats. In November, Russia announced the "Fundamentals of State Policy of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Deterrence," its first such document since 2020, and launched what was said to be a new medium-range ballistic missile toward Ukraine in what it called a "test."

With its relations with Western countries extremely limited, Russia continued seeking to further strengthen its ties with China, India, North Korea, and developing and emerging countries known as the "Global South." Of particular note are President Vladimir Putin's visit to China immediately after taking office for his overall fifth term, his first visit to North Korea in about 24 years, and the BRICS⁽¹⁾ Summit in October hosted by Russia. Russia claims to unite the efforts of the "global majority."

Regarding Belarus, the country has maintained a supportive stance towards Russia, which includes both Russia and Belarus making mention of deploying 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). Meanwhile, 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.

Amid this situation, the international community is paying close attention to the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus. In 2024, countries including the United States (U.S.), Germany, and the Republic of Korea (ROK) actively engaged in dialogue with Central Asia, holding summit- or ministerial-level meetings with the five Central Asian countries. Furthermore, China has been deepening its involvement in Central Asia year by year, steadily increasing the number of visits by leaders and ministers, and the Fifth China-Central Asia Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China in December.

In the Caucasus region, peace talks and border delimitation negotiations have been held intermittently between Azerbaijan and Armenia since the military activities in Nagorno-Karabakh⁽²⁾ in September 2023, and while positive developments have been seen that include an agreement on partial border delimitation, a peace treaty has yet to be concluded. In Georgia, amid allegations of fraud with regard to the country's parliamentary elections, the Georgian government announced at the end of November that it would not begin the EU accession process until the end of 2028. This led to large-scale protests by citizens supporting EU accession, resulting in clashes with security forces and many arrests and injuries.

(1) BRICS: A term referring to Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. At the summit meeting in August 2023, invitations for new membership were announced for Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). (Argentina subsequently withdrew its application for membership due to a change of administration, and there are also reports that Saudi Arabia has not yet joined.) At the summit meeting in October 2024, the leaders concurred on creating a new category of BRICS Partner Countries, and 2024 chair country Russia announced that nine countries — Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Thailand, Uganda, and Uzbekistan — will join as Partner Countries from January 2025. In January 2025, Brazil, the 2025 chair country, announced Indonesia's full membership.

(2) Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: A dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian settlement on Azerbaijani territory. In September 2023, Azerbaijan carried out military activities in the region, bringing the entire region under Azerbaijan's administration and causing many refugees to flow into Armenia.

2 Russia and Belarus

(1) Situation in Russia

A Internal Situation in Russia

In 2024, domestic politics continued to focus on the “special military operation” (hereinafter referred to as the “operation”). Since the beginning of the year, President Putin has demonstrated his support for participants in the “operation,” as well as bereaved families through means such as meeting with soldiers injured in the “operation,” celebrating the New Year with those who participated in the “operation” at the Presidential Residence, and spending a Russian Orthodox Christmas with the bereaved families. In his annual address to the Federal Assembly in February, Putin stressed that those who serve Russia are the “genuine elite.” A human resources development program was launched for participants in the “operation,” and some graduates of the program as well as individuals involved in the “operation” have been appointed to high-ranking federal and local government positions, and elected to assembly member. Russia has significantly increased the lump-sum payment it gives to contract soldiers at the time of contract signing, as well as one-time payment given to participants in the “operation” when they become injured or disabled.

In the presidential election held in March, in which opposition candidates were not allowed to participate, President Putin was elected with the highest voter turnout and percentage of votes in the Russian presidential elections. He invited participants in the “operation,” as well as their children, to his overall fifth presidential inauguration in May, and gave an inaugural address in which he called for national unity in support of the “operation.” With the start of the new presidential term, Russia’s cabinet was reshuffled, with Mikhail Mishustin continuing in his role as Prime Minister and First Deputy Prime Minister Andrei Belousov, an economic expert, appointed Minister of Defense. Russia has significantly increased its defense budget following its aggression against Ukraine.

In February, a regional department of the Federal Penitentiary Service announced that opposition figure Alexey Navalny had died in a penal colony. At his funeral, held in Moscow, a large number of citizens

lined up to offer flowers amid strict security measures from Russian authorities. In March, a few days after the presidential election, an attack involving gunfire and explosions occurred at a concert hall in a shopping complex in Moscow Oblast, leaving more than 140 people dead. The Russian government initially claimed that Ukraine was responsible. In early August, there was a slight, temporary drop in President Putin’s approval rating and a slight increase in social unrest following Ukraine’s advance into Russia’s Kursk Oblast. Meanwhile, as the Russian government has maintained and strengthened restrictions on freedom of speech and the press, the situation has not led directly to instability in the country.

In the meantime, in March, an event was held to celebrate the “10th anniversary of Crimea’s reunification with Russia.”

B Russian Foreign Policy

In order to stop Russian aggression as soon as possible, Western countries continue to provide robust support to Ukraine in 2024 and take measures that include maintaining severe sanctions against Russia. High-level dialogues between Russia and the West remain limited, with a few exceptions.

Against this backdrop, Russia is seeking to strengthen its ties with China, India, North Korea, and others, as well as developing and emerging countries known as the Global South.

Russia has made particular progress in its relationship with China in various fields, including politics, economy, and military affairs. In May, President Putin paid a state visit to China on his first overseas trip since taking office for his overall fifth term as president, and said that Russia-China relations have reached the highest level ever. With regard to economy, the proportion of bilateral transactions settled in yuan and ruble has increased, and de-dollarization continues. On the military front, the two countries are ramping up the frequency of their military cooperation, with continued joint navigation (July, October) and joint flights with bombers (November) by the two militaries in the vicinity of Japan, as well as mutual participation

in military exercises (September). The joint statement issued at the China-Russia summit in May also clearly stated that they would strengthen military cooperation, expand the scale of exercises, and conduct regular joint maritime and air patrols. From the perspective of Japan's security, these developments must continue to be closely monitored with serious concern.

In June, President Putin visited North Korea for the first time in about 24 years and signed the "Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," which entered into force in December and stipulates the provision of mutual assistance in the event of an attack on either participating "country." Moves to advance Russia-North Korea military cooperation, such as Russia's procurement and use of weapons and munitions, including ballistic missiles, from North Korea, and the deployment of North Korean troops to Russia and their engagement in combat against Ukraine, are of grave concern, not only lead to a further deterioration of the situation in Ukraine, but also affect the security of the region surrounding Japan. The G7, including Japan, strongly condemns these moves.

In October, Russia hosted the 16th BRICS Summit as the chair. At the summit, President Putin stated that delegations from 35 countries, including four new member states, and six international organizations had participated in the Summit, and asserted that the role and authority of BRICS are growing. In November, the first Ministerial Conference of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum was held, further invigorating frameworks involving the Global South.

Also in November, shortly after reports of Ukraine's use of Western-supplied weapons on Russian territory, the Presidential Administration of Russia issued a presidential decree approving the "Fundamentals of State Policy of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Deterrence," the first such document since 2020. In retaliation for the use of said weapons, Russia launched what was said to be a new intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) into Ukraine in what it called a "test." Russia has repeatedly made statements and moves that suggest the use of nuclear weapons in the context of its aggression against Ukraine. Japan, as the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during war, has taken every opportunity to convey to Russia its position that Japan firmly reject Russia's threat to use

nuclear weapons, let alone any use of nuclear weapons, and has also appealed to the international community as well.

C Russian Economy

Russia continues its aggression against Ukraine, and has significantly increased defense spending to continue the war. The government's budget proposal calls for an increase of about 25% over the previous year in defense spending for 2025, accounting for just over 30% of the annual budget and about 6.3% of gross domestic product (GDP).

As a result of increased investment and consumption owing to, including, fiscal stimulus measures by the Russian government and improvement in income situation, the GDP growth rate was positive at 3.6% in 2023, with similar growth predicted for 2024 (as of the end of 2024). Although sanctions have caused a significant reduction in energy exports to Europe, Russia has increased exports to countries such as China, India, and Türkiye that are not participating in sanctions against Russia, and has taken measures to circumvent these sanctions. Russia is moving away from the U.S. dollar for trade settlement, and in response to export restrictions on advanced components from Western countries, it appears to be facilitating indirect import of these components through friendly countries.

Meanwhile, within Russia, inflationary pressures continue due to increased import costs caused by sanctions and currency destabilization (weakened ruble), and the Russian central bank has continued to raise its key interest rate, which reached 21% in October, the highest since the start of the aggression. The country also continues to face a severe domestic labor shortage. Restrictions on access to advanced technology due to sanctions imposed by Western countries could have medium- to long-term effects on the economy and society.

(2) Japan-Russia Relations

A Overview

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. 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 and air safety, from the perspective of what is in Japan's national interest in the overall diplomacy of Japan.

With regard to fisheries, even after Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the Government of Japan has been holding discussions with Russia to maintain and secure Japan's interests related to fishing activities. In 2024, fishing operations continued under the "Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Mutual Relations in the Field of Fisheries off the coast of Both Countries" and the "Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics concerning cooperation in the fields of fisheries," as well as fishing operations based on the Kaigara Island Kelp Agreement, a private agreement. As for the Framework Agreement Concerning Operations of Japanese fishing vessels in the Waters Around the Four Northern Islands,⁽³⁾ in January 2023, Russia notified Japan that it could not arrange for intergovernmental consultations based on the agreement due to Japan's policy toward Russia regarding the situation in Ukraine. The Government of Japan has protested this and continues to urge the Russian side to realize operations to be carried out under the agreement.

Regarding security issues, following the intrusion into Japan's territorial airspace three times in September by a Russian military patrol aircraft over Japanese territorial waters north of Rebun Island in Hokkaido, Japan has lodged a very severe protest with the Russian government and urged that it investigate the cause and prevent a recurrence of such intrusion. Japan has also conveyed serious concerns to the Russian government about the increasing frequency of joint operations between the Chinese and Russian militaries around Japan.

On the subject of cultural and people-to-people exchanges, 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.

In January 2025, the Russian government decided to terminate the application of memorandums between the Japanese and Russian governments regarding the Japan Centers. Japan protested this, stating that the unilateral termination of the memorandums was unacceptable, and demanded that the Russian government's decision be revoked.

B The Northern Territories Issue 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 79 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 issue of the attribution of the Four Northern Islands.⁽⁴⁾

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

⁽³⁾ Agreement on the Operation of Japanese Fishing Vessels in the Waters Surrounding the Northern Territories.

⁽⁴⁾ 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>



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 issue of the attribution of the Four Northern Islands.

In addition, the Four-Island exchange program,⁽⁵⁾ Free Visits and Visits to Graves in the Northern Territories have not been conducted since 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19 and the deterioration of Japan-Russia relations following Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Resuming the Four-Island exchange program, Free Visits and Visits to Graves in the Northern Territories is one of the highest priorities in Japan-Russia relations. In response to the earnest wishes of the elderly former residents of the islands, the Government of Japan will continue to strongly urge the Russian side to resume these programs, with particular emphasis on Visits to 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 and surrounding waters, including military exercises, stating that these moves are contrary to Japan's position concerning these islands and unacceptable.

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 2024 declined by 16.8% from the previous year (Japan's total trade during the same period was approximately 1,188 billion Japanese yen). Due in part to Japan's sanctions against Russia, exports from Russia to Japan fell 16.7% from the previous year (especially coal), and exports from Japan to Russia also fell 17.2% 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 foundations of the international order come with a high price. These include sanctions against individuals such as Russian government and military officials, as well as individuals and organizations in Russia and occupied territories, along with sanctions in the financial sector that include freezing assets of several banks, and measures prohibiting imports and exports. Japan and like-minded countries, such as those in the G7, introduced a price cap system for Russian crude oil in December 2022 and for Russian oil products in February 2023, with the aim of stabilizing international oil prices while reducing Russia's 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 2024 and the G7 Apulia Summit in June that the G7 would further prevent evasion or circumvention of sanctions against Russia, and in June, designated additional entities in third countries suspected of involvement in the circumvention or evasion of sanctions. Russia's procurement of arms from North Korea is a violation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and could lead to a further deterioration of the situation in Ukraine. In response, Japan, in cooperation with like-minded countries such as the G7, introduced measures in May that include freezing the assets of individuals and organizations involved in these arms transfers. Furthermore, at the G7 Leaders' Video Conference in December, Prime Minister Ishiba stated that the government was considering imposing additional sanctions on organizations in third countries suspected of being involved in the circumvention or evasion of sanctions.

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

⁽⁵⁾ Refers to Visits to Graves in the Northern Territories, Free Visits, and exchange visits/receptions to the Four Northern Islands

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

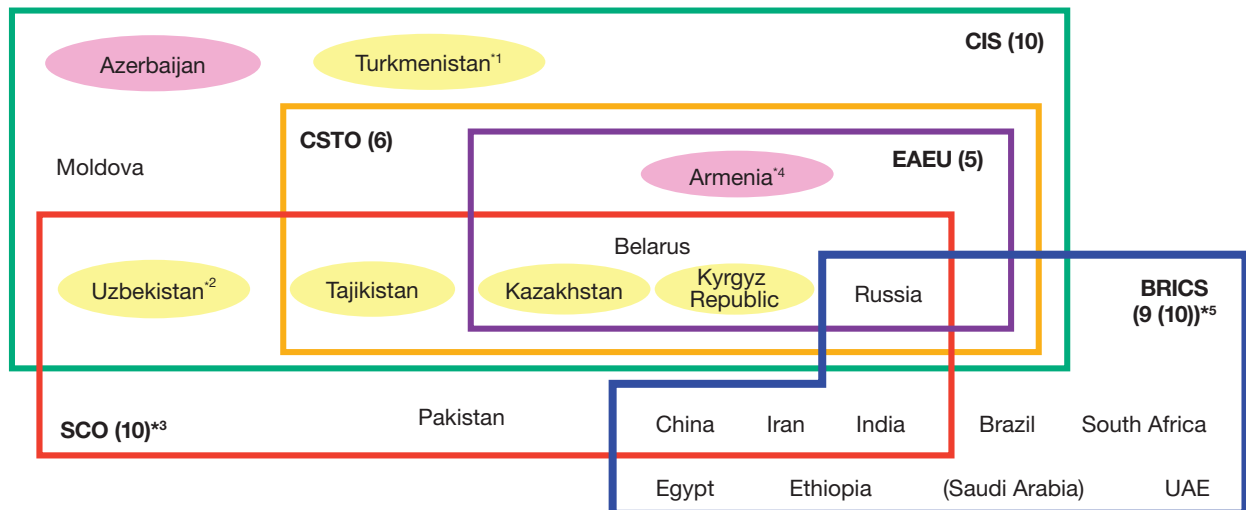
Although Belarus did not take part in Russia's aggression against Ukraine, it supported Russian military action through the use of its territory at the beginning of the aggression. In response to this, Western countries strengthened sanctions against Belarus, while Japan also implemented sanctions against Belarus.

Since then, President Lukashenko has held a series of meetings with President Putin in Moscow and other places to maintain and enhance relations with Russia. Foreign Minister Maxim Ryzhenkov, who took up his post in June, visited China and North Korea in succession in July as part of efforts to strengthen ties with countries close to Russia.

In the meantime, Russia and Belarus have been making moves to contain Western countries, such as stating that Russia has completed the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus. The international community condemned this as a further escalation of the situation as Russia continues its aggression against Ukraine.

In Belarus, elections for the House of Representatives (lower house) and local councils were held in February, but candidates with anti-government positions were not allowed to run, and only those loyal to the president were elected. No significant protests occurred on election day, but the U.S. pointed out problems such as a lack of democratic procedures and the absence of an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) election observer mission. In the presidential election on January 26, 2025, President Alexander Lukashenko, who took office in 1994, was elected for a seventh term amid concerns that similar problems had arisen as in the parliamentary elections.

Major Frameworks involving Russia, Central Asia, and Caucasus countries



() Indicates the number of member 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 Armenia has announced that it will freeze its participation in the CSTO in 2024.

*5 See footnote (1) (page 148)

<Abbreviations>

CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) (10)

CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) (6)

EAEU (Eurasian Economic Union) (5)

SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) (10)

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 opportunities such as the Foreign Minister's Meetings of the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue and other various opportunities, 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. Japan is strengthening bilateral relations with these countries through high-level dialogues, including the framework of the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue, which marked 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 is also focusing on strengthening connectivity in the region and promoting economic

cooperation, including facilitating logistics by speeding up customs clearance.

(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 such as the U.S., the EU, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), China, Russia, India, and Germany have held summit meetings with Central Asian countries. Japan will also utilize the framework of the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2024, to strengthen its relations with Central Asia through high-level dialogues and other means.

In June, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUJI Kiyoto visited the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, while also stopping in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.



Illustration commemorating the 20th anniversary of the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue ©MORI Kaoru



Japan-Uzbekistan Foreign Ministers' Meeting (March 8, Tokyo)

Furthermore, Prime Minister Kishida held telephone calls with the leaders of the five Central Asian countries in August, and Foreign Minister Iwaya held telephone calls with the foreign ministers of the five Central Asian countries in November.

Regarding relations with Uzbekistan, Foreign Minister Bakhtiyor Saidov visited Japan in March as a guest of MOFA to attend a Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Foreign Minister Kamikawa, and the two foreign ministers shared the intention to foster concrete bilateral cooperation at multiple levels. In June, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji visited the country and met with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Bobur Usmanov.

Regarding relations with Kazakhstan, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji met with Deputy Mayor of Almaty Nusupova during his visit to the country in June. Parliamentary Vice-Minister Fukazawa visited the capital, Astana, to attend the 30th anniversary commemoration of the International Science and Technology Center (ISTC), and held discussions with First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Akan Rakhmetulin and Minister of Science and Higher Education Sayasat Nurbek on deepening cooperation between the two countries in all areas, including science and technology, sports, and energy. In May, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Nazira Nurbayeva visited Japan and confirmed that Japan and Kazakhstan, the current chair of the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue, would cooperate on further coordination of "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogues and summit meetings.

Regarding relations with the Kyrgyz Republic, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji visited the country in June, paid a courtesy call on President Sadyr Japarov,

and exchanged views with relevant parties regarding cooperation in areas such as the sending and receiving of human resources, including highly skilled personnel, clean energy, logistics, and transportation infrastructure. Additionally, during his visit to Japan in September, Minister of Energy Taalaibek Omukeyevich Iblaev met with Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry SAITO Ken and exchanged views on bilateral cooperation concerning economics and energy.

Regarding relations with Tajikistan, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji visited Tajikistan in June and paid courtesy calls on Deputy Prime Minister Usmonali Usmonzoda and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sirojiddin Muhriddin, and exchanged views on issues including the utilization of Tajikistan's labor and human resources, strengthening cooperation toward holding the Summit Meeting of "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue in 2024, and cooperation in the international arena. A ceremony was also held to present football uniforms to the Tajikistan Football Federation.

Regarding relations with Turkmenistan, Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Rashid Meredov, who visited Japan in January, and signed the Cooperation Program between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan for 2024-2026. In February, Speaker of the House of Representatives NUKAGA Fukushima held talks with Chairperson of the Parliament Duniyagozel Gurmanova during her visit to Japan. In March, Minister of Trade and Foreign Economic Relations Begench Gochmollayev visited Japan, met with relevant parties, and attended the Turkmenistan-Japan Business Forum. A new Japan-Turkmenistan tax convention was signed at the 15th Joint Meeting of the Turkmen-Japanese and Japan-Turkmen Committees on Economic Cooperation, held in Ashgabat in December.

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 and other issues. Japan announced the Caucasus Initiative in 2018, which is comprised of two pillars: (a) assistance for human resources development for state building (human resources development) and (b) 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. Peace negotiations and consultations toward border delimitation have continued between Azerbaijan and Armenia since the military activities in September 2023, and at the eighth meeting of the State Commissions on the delimitation of the state border in April 2024, the two parties agreed to carry out border delimitation based on the Alma-Ata Declaration, which stipulates the recognition and respect of each other's territorial integrity. Based on the preliminary agreement reached at the same meeting, an agreement was reached with respect to part of the border between the two parties at the ninth meeting, held in May.

Regarding relations with Azerbaijan, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Yalchin Rafiyev visited Japan in February and met with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge, and the two concurred on their countries working together to ensure the success of the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to the

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) (November, Baku, Azerbaijan). Furthermore, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Elnur Mammadov visited Japan in May and held a discussion with Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa on cooperation between Japan and Azerbaijan in various fields.

Regarding relations with Armenia, in September, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge met with Secretary of the Security Council Armen Grigoryan, who was visiting Japan, and welcomed Armenia's participation in the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan. He also confirmed that through participation in the Expo, the two countries will further deepen bilateral relations, including strengthening and promoting economic relations, and continue close cooperation between the two countries in various fields.

As for relations with Georgia, in May, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa met with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexander Khvtisiashvili, who was visiting Japan for a round of political consultations between the two countries and exchanged views on cooperation in various fields. He also conveyed his congratulations on the opening of the Honorary Consulate of Georgia in Kagoshima in the same month. In the Georgian parliamentary elections held in October, the ruling party “Georgian Dream” won more than half of the seats, but opposition parties did not recognize the election results, claiming there was electoral fraud, and held protests calling for the election to be rerun. In addition, the announcement by the Georgian government at the end of November that it would not start the EU membership process until the end of 2028 led to large-scale protests by citizens supporting EU membership, resulting in many arrests and injuries due to clashes with security forces. In response, Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson issued a statement expressing concern over the situation and calling on the Georgian government to exercise restraint in order to avoid further deterioration and to take constructive measures that will gain the understanding of the Georgian people, as well as expressing its hope that the situation will be calmed down soon.

Section 7

The Middle East and North Africa

1 Overview

The Middle East and North Africa (hereinafter “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 significant 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 particular, regarding the situation surrounding Gaza, following the terror attacks by Hamas and others against Israel in October 2023, the United States (U.S.), Qatar, and Egypt have made mediation efforts in order to achieve a ceasefire and the release of hostages. Diplomatic efforts have also been made at the United Nations for adopting multiple ceasefire resolutions. Japan engaged in repeated diplomatic efforts, based on its relations with the countries in the region and as a member of the G7 and of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and in close cooperation with the countries concerned to improve the humanitarian situation and help calm the situation as soon as possible.

As 2025 began, prolonged negotiations reached a crucial juncture, coinciding with coordination between Biden administration and the incoming Trump administration in the U.S. On January 15, an agreement on the release of hostages and a ceasefire was reached by the parties concerned, and came into effect on January 19. Foreign Minister Iwaya released a statement welcoming the agreement and urged the parties to implement the agreement steadily and in good faith. The G7

issued a leaders’ statement expressing their full endorsement and support for the agreement.

The influence of the situation surrounding Gaza prior to the ceasefire agreement spilled over to other surrounding areas and heightened the tensions and instability throughout the Middle East. In the West Bank, restrictions on economic activity and people’s mobility have exacerbated poor socio-economic conditions, while settler violence has expanded, creating friction between settlers and residents. Along the Israel-Lebanon border, there have been frequent battles and exchanges of attacks between the Israeli military and Hezbollah. In the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, attacks on ships by the Houthis (Yemeni armed forces) have continued, along with frequent direct drone and missile attacks on Israel. In addition, as the unpredictability of the regional situation increased, there were repeated exchanges of retaliatory attacks between Israel and Iran. Iran launched direct strikes against Israel using missiles and other weaponry in April and October, while Israel in turn struck Iranian military facilities in late October. Furthermore, in December, Syrian President Bashar Al-Asad, who had ruled the country for many years, fled into exile due to domestic unrest, and his regime collapsed. In Afghanistan, there are concerns over further deterioration of the serious humanitarian situation since the Taliban’s takeover of Kabul in August 2021.

The Biden administration in the U.S., which was inaugurated in January 2021, worked vigorously 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, most notably by announcing proposals regarding negotiations for hostage release and a ceasefire at the end of May.

Given that Japan imports over 90% of its crude oil from the Middle East, the situation in the Middle East is directly tied to Japan's peace and prosperity. Therefore, it is extremely important for Japan 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 its ties with Middle Eastern countries in a wide range of fields that include the economy, politics, security, culture, and people-to-people exchanges. The 5th Japan-Arab Economic Forum was held in Tokyo in July and provided an opportunity to exchange views on future policies for strengthening economic relations with Arab countries and to build a multilayered network of the public and private sectors between Japan and Arab countries. Foreign Minister Kamikawa held foreign ministers' meetings with Egypt and Libya on the sidelines of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD)

Ministerial Meeting held in August. In September, Foreign Minister Kamikawa also held a Japan-Iran Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New York along with a Japan-Egypt-Jordan Foreign Ministers' Meeting, where the foreign ministers exchanged views on the increasingly tense situation in the Middle East. In addition, amid the instability in the energy market in the wake of the situation in Ukraine, Japan conducted outreach to the Gulf countries to help with the stabilization of the international crude oil market, including through telephone calls at the leaders' and foreign ministers' levels, and confirmed cooperation in a wide range of areas, including energy security.

In 2024, several natural disasters occurred in the Middle East, including devastating floods in northern Afghanistan (May). Japan has implemented various forms of humanitarian assistance, including through international organizations, to address the damage caused by these disasters.

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.

On October 7, Hamas and other Palestinian militants launched thousands of rockets at Israel from the Gaza Strip, and a large number of fighters breached Israeli checkpoints and borders, killing and kidnapping IDF⁽¹⁾ soldiers as well as civilians, including foreign nationals. At least 1,200 Israelis were killed and more

than 5,500 wounded. In addition, more than 250 people, including foreign nationals, were taken into the Gaza Strip and held hostage. In response, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared a "state of war" and the IDF launched large-scale air strikes on the Gaza Strip, followed by a ground operation.

According to Gaza health authorities, as of the end of December 2024, more than 45,500 people had been killed and 108,300 injured in the Gaza Strip, and approximately 1.9 million Gaza residents had been displaced.

As the fighting dragged on, international efforts are underway to reach a ceasefire and release the hostages. The U.S., Egypt, and Qatar played leading roles in mediating efforts to reach an agreement between Israel and Hamas. On March 25, the UNSC adopted Resolution 2728, which demanded an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. Furthermore, following U.S. President Biden's announcement on May 31 of a three-phase negotiation plan for the release of hostages

(1) IDF: Israel Defense Forces

and a ceasefire, the UNSC adopted Resolution 2735 on June 10, which welcomed the plan and called on Hamas to accept it, as well as calling on both parties to fully implement it unconditionally and without delay. In addition, senior government officials of President-elect Trump, who won the U.S. presidential election in November, began engaging with relevant parties even before his administration took office. In parallel with this move, diplomatic efforts to achieve an early ceasefire redoubled, including through the Biden administration's continued mediation efforts. Against this backdrop, on January 15, 2025, the parties reached an agreement on a ceasefire and the release of hostages which came into effect on the 19th.

On April 19, a UNSC resolution on admitting Palestine's as a full UN member was put to a vote but was vetoed. Subsequently, on May 11, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to upgrade Palestine's status within the UN. It was adopted by a majority vote, including Japan's vote in favor. In addition, following the legislation enacted by the Israeli Parliament (Knesset) on October 28 that would severely restrict the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the UN General Assembly simultaneously adopted resolutions on support for UNRWA and a Palestinian proposal calling for a ceasefire in Gaza on December 11, with a majority of votes in favor, including Japan. On December 19, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution requesting an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the obligations of Israel in relation to the activities conducted by the UN and other international organizations, including UNRWA, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory for the purpose of humanitarian assistance and other activities.

Regarding international justice, on December 29, 2023, South Africa filed a case against Israel at the ICJ, alleging that Israel had violated its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. In response to South Africa's request, the ICJ issued three orders for provisional measures, in January, March, and May. On July 19, the ICJ also issued an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's policies and actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. On

September 18, the UN General Assembly voted on a draft resolution based on the advisory opinion, which was adopted by a majority vote, including Japan's vote in favor. Furthermore, on November 21, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, and Hamas military leader Mohammed Deif, on charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes related to the situation in Palestine.

In the West Bank, Israel continues to expand settlements and "legalize" settlement outposts, leading to continued violence, including acts of violence by extremist settlers.

Regarding the situation in Israel and Lebanon, armed clashes between Israel and Hezbollah have continued since October 8, 2023, with civilian casualties on both sides. In September 2024, Israel announced its objective of ensuring the safe return of northern residents and launched air strikes across Lebanon, including the southern suburbs of Beirut. Ground operations began on October 1 and fighting intensified further, but about two months later, on November 26, the Israeli and Lebanese governments agreed to a ceasefire through the mediation of the U.S. and France. It was decided that the Lebanese army and security forces would deploy to their own territory over the next 60 days and that the IDF would gradually withdraw, aiming for a permanent cessation of hostilities. However, sporadic exchanges of attacks have continued in some areas even after the agreement came into effect.

B The Government of Japan's Efforts

In its efforts to realize a "two-state solution" that allows Israel and Palestine to coexist peacefully, Japan, in coordination 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 to the Palestinian peoples.

As a distinctive Japanese initiative, Japan has been promoting the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" initiative, aimed 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 2024, 18 Palestinian private enterprises are operating in the flagship Jericho Agro-Industrial

Park (JAIP) project, creating approximately 285 jobs. In addition, Japan is mobilizing the resources and economic development knowledge of East Asian countries to support Palestinian state building through the Conference on the Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD). In 2024, a working level online meeting was held to discuss humanitarian needs arising from the situation surrounding Gaza. Cambodia and Laos became new official members in July. Since October 2023, Japan has provided humanitarian assistance totaling approximately 230 million U.S. dollars to Palestine and material assistance through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Furthermore, Japan decided to impose measures such as asset freezes on four Israeli settlers involved in acts of violence in West Bank, as part of its contribution to international peace efforts addressing this issue. As a member of the UN Security Council, Japan also played an active role in adoption of Gaza-related ceasefire resolutions, including Resolution 2728 and Resolution 2735.

Since October 7, 2023, Japan has consistently and unequivocally condemned the terror attacks by Hamas and others, and urged Israel to fully comply with international law, including international humanitarian law, in exercising its right to defend itself and its people. Japan has also made proactive diplomatic efforts by vigorously conducting meetings and telephone calls with counterparts from concerned countries and regions at leader and foreign minister levels and calling on all parties concerned to achieve a ceasefire and release of hostages, comply with international law, including international humanitarian law, improve the humanitarian situation, and calm the situation as soon as possible. Foreign Minister Iwaya issued a statement welcoming the agreement on the release of hostages and ceasefire reached between the parties in January 2025, and calling for its steady and sincere implementation.

Furthermore, Japan engaged in candid discussions within the G7 framework at various levels, including leaders and foreign ministers. The G7 Leaders' Statements on the situations in Gaza and the Middle East were issued in June and October, respectively, and the G7 Foreign Ministers' Statement on the Situation in the Middle East was issued in August. In January 2025, following the agreement between the parties

on the release of hostages and a ceasefire, the leaders issued a statement fully endorsing and supporting the agreement.

(2) Israel

Israel is a leader in advanced technology and innovation, making it an important economic partner for Japan. It also plays a critical role in maintaining stability in the Middle East.

The current government was formed in December 2022 as a coalition led by Prime Minister Netanyahu's Likud Party with participation from far-right parties. In October 2023, a national unity government was formed that included the main opposition parties following terror attacks by Hamas and others. Debate continues within the administration over issues such as military strategy and the conscription system.

In relations with Japan, against the backdrop of the tense situation, Japan engaged in numerous high-level and candid exchanges with Israel. State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUJI Kiyoto visited Israel in February, and Foreign Minister Kamikawa held four telephone calls with the foreign minister. The minister also met with the families of those held hostage by Hamas in the terror attack on October 7, 2023, as well as those who were rescued after being taken hostage. Additionally, Foreign Minister Iwaya held telephone conversations with the Israeli foreign minister in October and December.



Foreign Minister Kamikawa receives rescued hostages and hostage families (August 22, Tokyo)

(3) Palestine

Based on the 1993 Oslo Accords and other agreements, the Palestinian Authority (PA) began self-rule in the



State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji pays a courtesy call on Palestinian President Abbas (February 28, Palestine)

West Bank 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. In July 2024, representatives of 14 Palestinian factions, including Fatah and Hamas, gathered in Beijing for reconciliation talks and issued the Beijing Declaration. However, a state of division remains as Fatah takes control in the West Bank and Hamas controls Gaza.

In 2024, nine countries formally recognized Palestine as a state: Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, the Bahamas, Norway, Spain, Ireland, Slovenia, and Armenia.

Regarding Japan's relations with Palestine, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji visited Palestine in February and met with President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh. In addition, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a telephone conversation with Prime Minister, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Mustafa, immediately after the inauguration of the new cabinet in April. Foreign Minister Iwaya also held a telephone call with him in October.

(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 there are still concerns about a lack of ethnic and religious inclusiveness, as well as ongoing significant restrictions on the rights of women and girls, including access to education and employment. The international community has expressed serious concerns over the August 2024 promulgation of the so-called “vice and virtue law,” based on their particular interpretation of Islam, which severely restricts the conduct of the people.

Also, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has reported that production of poppy, a raw material for illegal drugs that has historically been widely cultivated in the country, has declined significantly, partly due to the Taliban's control of poppy production after 2022. The challenge is whether poppy farmers can be led to move away from illegal drug cultivation and toward legitimate alternative livelihoods.

Although security has improved, sporadic terrorist attacks by groups affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Khorasan Province) have occurred in various places, and there are concerns that these will have an impact outside the region. Against this backdrop, Japan continues direct engagement with the Taliban and call on them 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 prevent Afghanistan from becoming once again a hotbed of terrorism and isolation from the international community as it was in the 1990s. Regarding the human rights situation in Afghanistan, Japan expressed deep concern over the Taliban's promulgation of the so-called “vice and virtue law” in a statement by Press Secretary in August. Japan has also actively contributed to discussions on the international stage. In 2024, as in the previous year, Japan continued to serve as a non-permanent member

of the UN Security Council and as the penholder⁽²⁾ regarding the situation in Afghanistan, drafting and coordinating relevant resolutions, and contributing to the unanimous adoption of UNSC Resolution 2727, which renewed the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), as well as issuing Security Council press statements on the situation in Afghanistan.

According to a UN announcement, approximately half 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. In 2024, Japan provided emergency relief goods through JICA in response to the massive flood damage that occurred in Northern Afghanistan in May. In December, Japan made the decision to provide additional assistance of approximately 27.5 million U.S. dollars in the FY2024 supplementary budget.

(5) Iran

Iran is a major Shiite regional power with a population of about 85 million that boasts abundant natural resources.

Japan has developed a traditionally friendly relationship with Iran for more than 90 years.

Iran held a presidential election a year earlier than planned after a helicopter carrying President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and others crashed in May, killing all on board. In the runoff election held on July 5, Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian was elected as the next president, and the Presidential Inauguration Ceremony was held on July 30. State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUGE Yoshifumi attended the Inauguration Ceremony as a special envoy of Prime Minister Kishida. In addition, on July 22, Prime Minister Kishida held a telephone call with President-elect Pezeshkian, expressing his high hope for Iran to play a more constructive role towards the peace and stability of the Middle East and to advance cooperation with the international community.

Against the backdrop of the situation in Gaza from October 2023, the exchange of fire between Lebanon's



State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge (Special Envoy of the Prime Minister) pays a courtesy call on Iranian President Pezeshkian (July 30, Tehran, Iran)

Hezbollah and Israel has intensified. On April 1, 2024, a facility linked to the Iranian embassy in Damascus, the Syrian capital was destroyed by a missile attack, resulting in casualties. Later that month on the 13th, Iran launched its first large-scale attack on Israeli soil, using drones and ballistic missiles, increasing tensions between Israel and Iran.

On October 1, Iran launched another large-scale ballistic missile attack against Israel, citing the killing of Hezbollah's Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah in an Israeli attack in Lebanon on September 27, 2024, among other reasons.

In response, Israel launched attacks on military facilities in Iran on October 26. In response to these developments, Japan, through statements by the foreign minister as well as other means, expressed strong condemnation of any action that would escalate the situation in the Middle East and urged all parties involved to de-escalate the situation. Japan has also urged both Iran and Israel to exercise maximum restraint.

In the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, there continues to be concerns in the international community about growing military cooperation between Iran and Russia.

Regarding the nuclear issue, following the U.S.'s withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran has taken steps to undermine its commitment to the JCPOA since July 2019. As of the end of 2024, Iran has produced uranium enriched up to 60%, left parts of safeguard issues unresolved, suspended the implementation of the Additional Protocol that allowed unannounced inspections by the

⁽²⁾ Refers to the member states that lead discussions on specific agenda items and draft documents such as resolutions and statements by the chair in the Security Council.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and has withdrawn the designation of some IAEA inspectors of certain nationalities. The Pezeshkian administration, which took office in August, has shown an eagerness to engage in dialogue with European countries and the U.S., but Iran has yet to return to complying with its commitments under the nuclear agreement. Japan calls for Iran to respond constructively, including by cooperating fully and without delay with the IAEA, with a view to rebuilding the nuclear agreement.

Japan is an ally of the U.S. while also maintaining good relations with Iran for many years, supporting Iran's efforts to assist Afghan refugees and the development of a system for preserving wetlands in Lake Urmia and the surrounding area. Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a telephone call with Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in April, Acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani on August 15, and with Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi on August 28. Foreign Minister Kamikawa also met with Foreign Minister Araghchi while she was visiting New York, U.S., in September. Additionally, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone call with Foreign Minister Araghchi in October. In addition to these high-level meetings, a Japan-Iran Vice-Ministerial Consultation was held in December. 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 these 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 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 maintained a close friendship with Japan, as epitomized by episodes such as the Ertuğrul Frigate incident in 1890.

In February 2023 a major earthquake struck southeastern Türkiye, killing more than 50,000 people. In addition, with inflation putting pressure on the

lives of citizens, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was re-elected in the presidential election in May that year. In the subsequent local election in March 2024, President Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) suffered its first defeat to the opposition since its founding.

On the diplomatic front, while focusing on Europe and the U.S., Türkiye has pursued a multifaceted diplomatic policy that strengthens relations not only with neighboring countries but also with Latin America and Africa. Regarding the situation in the Gaza Strip, Türkiye initially showed a willingness to mediate diplomacy, but as the situation escalated, it has adopted a stance of criticizing Israel and defending Hamas, while also actively providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza.

Various dialogue frameworks exist between Japan and Türkiye. In 2024, a meeting of the Japan-Türkiye Maritime Dialogue was held to exchange views on maritime issues, including the maintenance and development of the maritime order based on the rule of law, as well as discussions on the situation in the East China Sea, South China Sea, and the maritime areas around Türkiye. Both sides affirmed their intention to continue regular exchanges of views between the two countries in the future.

The year 2024 marked the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Türkiye. In addition to high-level visits, including Foreign Minister Kamikawa's visit to Türkiye in January, commemorative events were held throughout both countries. In June, Türkiye's Navy corvette *TCG KINALIADA* made port calls to Kushimoto (Wakayama Prefecture), Tokyo, and Kure (Hiroshima Prefecture),



Special stamp issued on August 6, 2024, for the "100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Türkiye"

COLUMN

The 100th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Türkiye

In 2024, Japan and Türkiye celebrated the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. On August 6, 1924, the year after the founding of the Republic of Türkiye, the diplomatic relations between the two countries were established following Japan's ratification of the Treaty of Lausanne and its entry into force. Türkiye was the first country in the Middle East where a Japanese Embassy was established (in 1925), demonstrating the great importance Japan has placed on Türkiye since that time.



Japan and Türkiye went through the difficult time of World War II. However, as Türkiye entered the war in its final stages, and the two countries did not engage in combat, their friendly relations remained largely unaffected. After the war, when Japan achieved membership in the United Nations (UN) in 1956, Türkiye appealed in the discussion of the UN Security Council, stating that “The admission of Japan, a great country, to the United Nations will make a remarkable contribution to the preservation of peace and cooperation in the international community,” and explained the importance of Japan's UN membership to other countries, devoting their utmost efforts to help Japan return to the international community.

In recent years, Japan-Türkiye relations have been increasingly developing across a wide range of fields, including politics, the economy, disaster risk reduction, and culture. The Second Bosphorus Bridge, the first structure in Türkiye to incorporate a seismic isolation system, was constructed with Japanese yen loans. The Marmaray subway tunnel, which is said to have fulfilled a 150-year-old dream for Istanbul, was also built with Japanese financial assistance. Moreover, in the face of natural disasters such as the Marmara Earthquake in 1999, the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, and more recently the earthquake in southeastern Türkiye in February 2023, Japan and Türkiye have supported each other through difficult situations, in keeping with the proverb “A friend in need is a friend indeed.”

In 2024, marking the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, high-level exchanges were conducted, including the visits to Türkiye by Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs FUKAZAWA Yoichi in January, and Special Advisor to the Prime Minister ISHIHARA Hirotaka in May, as well as a visit by Their Imperial Highnesses Crown Prince and Crown Princess Akishino in December. In addition, in June, the Turkish Navy vessel *TCG KINALIADA* made port calls in Japan over a two-month period. In Kushimoto Town, Wakayama Prefecture, one of its ports of call, a memorial ceremony was held for the Turkish *Ertuğrul* Frigate, which was wrecked off the coast of Oshima Island in the same town 134 years ago. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary, in addition to looking back on the history of friendship, both countries implemented commemorative projects at various levels in both public and private sectors. As a conclusion to these projects, a commemorative concert was held in Istanbul in the presence of Their Imperial Highnesses Crown Prince and Crown Princess Akishino, featuring a collaboration performance of Turkish folk dance and a Japanese drum (*wadaiko*) group. The event was a remarkable collaboration of the two countries' traditions and cultures, generating great excitement, and these projects concluded with the support of many people from both Japan and Türkiye. Japan intends to continue to further deepen relations with Türkiye and the ties between the two peoples.



A joint performance of Turkish folk dance and a Japanese drum (*wadaiko*) group (December, Istanbul, Türkiye)

ment, and these projects concluded with the support of many people from both Japan and Türkiye. Japan intends to continue to further deepen relations with Türkiye and the ties between the two peoples.

where it took part in events such as a memorial ceremony for the *Ertuğrul* Frigate incident. In August, the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force's training ships *Kashima* and *Shimakaze* called at Istanbul as part of their long-distance training voyage to commemorate the 100th anniversary of ties. In September, the Japan-Türkiye Disaster Preparedness Seminar was held in Istanbul, where both countries shared their knowledge and expertise through reports on their responses to the Southeast Türkiye Earthquake and the Noto Peninsula Earthquake.

(7) Iraq

After the Iraq War in 2003, Iraq enacted a new constitution in 2005, and a government formed through democratic elections is now in charge of running the country.

On the domestic political front, a state of confusion continued 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 October 2024, a Parliamentary Election for the Kurdistan Region was held for the first time in six years, and in November, a national census was conducted for the first time in 37 years since 1987.

Following the inauguration of the Al-Sudani administration, domestic security in Iraq has improved significantly. However, since October, the situation in Israel and Palestine has affected the situation in Iraq, with successive attacks conducted on U.S. military facilities in Iraq by pro-Iranian militia groups calling themselves the "Islamic Resistance in Iraq," and U.S. forces launching counterattacks against the pro-Iranian militia groups.

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.

Since 2003, Japan has consistently provided support to Iraq, including economic cooperation worth

approximately 14.2 billion U.S. dollars (as of the end of 2024).

(8) Jordan

The situation in Jordan remains relatively stable compared to other parts of the persistently turbulent Middle East region. Jordan has, under the leadership of King Abdullah II, played a vital 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 international community highly values Jordan's contributions. Jordan and Japan have longstanding friendly ties, and the relationship between the two countries was elevated to a strategic partnership in 2018, maintaining a consistently close relationship.

The year 2024 marked the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Jordan and was commemorated with events held at various levels, involving both public and private sectors of both countries. Of note, in response to rising tensions throughout the Middle East region, including the situation in Gaza, there was close communication between leaders and foreign ministers. In addition to holding a Summit Meeting with Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Bisher Hani Al-Khasawneh when he visited Japan in February, Prime Minister Kishida also held a summit telephone call with King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein in September, during which they exchanged views on the latest situation and confirmed close cooperation between both countries. At the foreign ministerial level, Foreign Minister Kamikawa paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister and Defense Minister Al-Khasawneh in February, held a Japan-Egypt-Jordan Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New York in September, and held several telephone calls with the foreign minister. Furthermore, immediately after taking office in October, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone call with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Safadi, in which they exchanged views on the regional situation, including the situation in Lebanon, where tensions have risen sharply, and requested cooperation in protecting Japanese nationals. Foreign Minister Safadi responded by saying that he would spare no effort in cooperating



Japan-Jordan Summit Meeting (February 16, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

to ensure the safety of Japanese nationals. Thanks to this close communication, the following day, a Self-Defense Force aircraft transported Japanese nationals and others from Lebanon to Jordan without incident.

Furthermore, Prince El Hassan bin Talal and Princess Sarvath El Hassan visited Japan in November, during which a reception commemorating the 70th anniversary of relations was hosted by the Embassy of Jordan in Japan and served as a symbol of the traditional relationship between the imperial and royal families of the two countries. In terms of security, the cooperative relationship between the two countries in the field of defense is becoming even closer, with Vice Chief of Staff of the Joint Staff of the Self-Defense Forces NAGUMO Kenichiro visiting Jordan in February and Major General Yousef Al-Hnaity, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Jordan Armed Forces, visiting Japan in November.

(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 through frameworks such as “Japan-Saudi Vision 2030” with Saudi Arabia and the “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Initiative (CSPI)” with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), based on the view that these reforms will contribute to the long-term stability and prosperity of the Middle East. In addition, regarding the negotiations for Japan-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)⁽³⁾

Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which had been suspended since 2009, the first round of negotiations after the resumption was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in December.

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 response to rising tensions in the Middle East since October 2023, Saudi Arabia has played a leading role in foreign policy discussions among Arab and Islamic countries, including by hosting the Arab-Islamic Summit (a joint summit by the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)) and the Global Alliance for Implementation of the Two-State Solution meeting. Furthermore, under “Saudi Vision 2030,” the country is promoting new initiatives in various fields with the aim of comprehensive socio-economic reforms. Through various talks, including a video teleconference meeting between Prime Minister Kishida and Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister in May, a telephone call between Prime Minister Ishiba and Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister in November, a telephone call between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of Foreign Affairs Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud in May, and a telephone call between Foreign Minister Iwaya and Minister of Foreign Affairs Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud in October, the two countries confirmed their intention to strengthen their strategic partnership and to further promote cooperation in various fields under the framework of the Japan-Saudi Vision 2030, as well as working closely together in the international arena toward the stabilization of the region and the international community.

The UAE is also an important partner in terms of energy security, supplying approximately 40% of Japan's crude oil imports. Through the visit to Japan by Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and Special Envoy to Japan Sultan Al Jaber in July, and a telephone call between Foreign Minister Iwaya and

⁽³⁾ Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): Established in 1981 by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (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.

Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and Special Envoy to Japan Sultan Al Jaber in December, both sides confirmed that they would further promote cooperation in various fields under the framework of the “CSPI” and cooperation under the Japan-UAE Innovation Partnership and the Global Green Energy Hub initiative to strengthen the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries. In September, the leaders of Japan and the UAE announced the launch of the negotiations for a Japan-UAE Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), and the first meeting was held in Tokyo in November. In addition, in the defense field, the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of UAE concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, which was signed in May 2023, 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



Japan-Saudi Arabia Summit Video Teleconference Meeting (May 21, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)



Meeting between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and Special Envoy to Japan of UAE Jaber (July 4, Tokyo)

U.S. and the Taliban, negotiations over the exchange of detainees between the U.S. and Iran, and ceasefire and hostage release negotiations between Israel and Hamas. Through the Policy Dialogue between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Japan and Qatar held in November, the two countries confirmed to strengthen cooperation in a wide range of areas, including politics, economy, and defense exchanges, under the “Strategic Partnership” confirmed between Prime Minister Kishida and Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani in 2023.

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. The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force made a port call in Oman and conducted at-sea training, advancing cooperation and exchange between the two countries in a wide range of areas, including maritime security.

Kuwait is a strong partner with Japan, supplying approximately 9% of its crude oil imports. Through the Policy Consultations Meeting between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the State of Kuwait in December and other meetings, the two countries exchanged views on their cooperative relationship in a wide range of areas including bilateral cooperation in political, the economic, energy, cultural fields, strengthening of bilateral contact and exchanges, as well as cooperation in the international arena. The two countries confirmed to collaborate toward stabilizing the regional and international community.

Bahrain is home to the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, the U.S. Fifth Fleet, making it an important partner for Japan in terms of ensuring the safety of Japanese-related ships in the Middle East and stabilizing the region. Japan and Bahrain confirmed that they would enhance cooperation to maintain and strengthen the rule of law through bilateral communications such as a telephone call between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani in April.

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 had continued to fight against the Government of Yemen and the Arab Coalition. After a nationwide ceasefire in April 2022, a lull has continued despite the ceasefire expiring in October of the same year. In 2023, several rounds of direct talks between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis, mediated by Oman, have been held, showing positive moves toward a lasting peace in Yemen. However, in response to the situation in the Gaza Strip, in November 2023, the Houthis, who stand in solidarity with Hamas, declared that they would attack vessels related to Israel and "seized" a Japan-related vessel in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen, and continue to carry out attacks against vessels 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 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 2024, the UN Security Council adopted the resolutions 2722 and 2735 in January and June respectively, 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. Furthermore, in November, Japan and the U.S. led the Security Council in issuing a press statement condemning in the strongest terms the attacks on commercial vessels by the Houthis. Due to the protracted conflict, Yemen is facing a severe humanitarian situation that has been described as "one of the worst in the world." Since 2015, Japan has cooperated with international organizations to provide humanitarian assistance to Yemen totaling approximately 460 million U.S. dollars (as of the end of 2024).

(10) Syria

A Changes in the situation

The Syrian crisis, ongoing since March 2011 for approximately 13 years, shows no prospect of stabilization nor political resolution. The Constitutional Committee, established in 2019 through UN mediation to bring together the Assad administration and dissidents, has not convened for over a year.

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, 2023, to reinstate Syria as a member as part of its efforts to improve relations with Arab countries that have been observed in recent 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.⁽⁴⁾

On the military and security front, the worsening situation in Gaza since October 2023 and Israel's expanded attacks on the Lebanese pro-Iranian militia group Hezbollah since mid-September 2024 have also had an impact on the situation in Syria, including increased attacks on Syria, which acts as a supply base for Hezbollah. Meanwhile, opposition forces led by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) began taking control of the northern city of Aleppo around November 27, and on December 8 they declared that they had taken control of the capital, Damascus. The following day, the Government of Russia announced that President Assad had fled into exile to Russia. On the 10th, HTS declared the establishment of a "caretaker government" in Damascus and announced that a transition to a new government was scheduled to take place by March 1, 2025. The "caretaker government" also announced its intention to disband all opposition organizations and integrate them into a national army directly under the Ministry of Defense, as well as prospects for holding a national dialogue and drafting a new constitution. Also, on December 15, Israel approved a plan to double the population of the Golan Heights and advanced into the buffer zone of the Golan Heights. Meanwhile, Türkiye and Arab and Western countries have visited Syria and initiated contact with the "caretaker government."

Regarding the humanitarian situation, the major earthquake that occurred in the southeastern part of Türkiye on February 6 in 2023 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 is said to reach 16.7

⁽⁴⁾ The state's power violates the fundamental human rights of the people guaranteed by the Constitution.

million in 2024, and the number of internally displaced persons exceeded 7.2 million. In addition to various long-term challenges, the intensification of conflict in Lebanon since mid-September 2024 has resulted in a large number of refugees and returnees from Lebanon to Syria. As of November 12, that number has reached approximately 530,000, indicating that humanitarian needs are the highest since the crisis began.

B The Government of Japan's Efforts

Japan strongly hopes that the violence in Syria will cease as soon as possible and that all Syrians will be able to enjoy fundamental human rights, dignity, freedom, and prosperity. Japan believes that the future of Syria should be determined by the Syrian people themselves and therefore looks forward to a peaceful and stable transition of power in Syria. In particular, Japan calls on all parties concerned to fully respect the will of the Syrian people, and to play a constructive role in promoting comprehensive political settlement and national reconciliation, through dialogue among the Syrian people, and ultimately peace and prosperity in the region, based on UN Security Council Resolution 2254. In response to the situation in Lebanon since mid-September, Japan provided a new Emergency Grant of 10 million U.S. dollars through UN agencies on October 29 to people who fled from Lebanon to Syria. Japan's total humanitarian assistance to Syria and neighboring countries since 2012 has amounted to more than 3.5 billion U.S. dollars.

(11) Lebanon

Faced with various challenges due to the complex crisis, Lebanon has been in a political vacuum since the end of former President Michel Aoun's term at the end of October 2022, with no conclusion reached in parliamentary talks due to conflicts among political forces and a new president yet to be elected. 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 October 2023, the situation in Gaza has affected Lebanon through the exchanges of fire between Israel and Hezbollah and others in the southern part of the country bordering Israel. Furthermore, since mid-September, Israel has conducted large-scale air strikes in Dahieh in the southern suburbs of Beirut, as well as in southern and eastern Lebanon. This resulted in one million people being displaced within the country. On November 26, the Israeli and Lebanese governments agreed to a ceasefire through the mediation of the U.S. and France. Japan welcomes this ceasefire agreement and strongly demands all parties take all measures to fully implement the ceasefire agreement, including the full implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1701, and commit to regional stability. On January 9, 2025, a parliamentary session was convened to elect a president, and Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, General Joseph Aoun, was elected as the 14th president. The election of a president after more than two years of political vacuum can be seen as an important step toward the country's stability and development.

Japan has provided a total of more than 290.9 million U.S. dollars in assistance to Lebanon (including broad-based assistance) since 2012. In addition, in response to the deteriorating humanitarian situation, on October 21, Japan provided an additional Emergency Grant of 10 million U.S. dollars through UN agencies and other organizations. In October, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone call with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants Abdallah BouHabib, where the two countries confirmed that they would continue to work together to calm the situation in the region and in Lebanon.

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 major regional power in the Middle East and North Africa with a

population of over 110 million. Since the terror attacks by Hamas and others on October 7, 2023, Egypt has played an important role in the stability of the region through evacuations of foreign nationals and others

from the Gaza Strip, acceptance of the wounded and sick, and acceptance of humanitarian aid supplies from international organizations and countries worldwide and transporting them to the Gaza Strip. Egypt has also engaged in diplomatic efforts such as mediating between Israel and Hamas, alongside Qatar and the U.S., contributing significantly to de-escalation efforts, preventing further destabilization in the region, and leading discussions on the urgency of improving the humanitarian situation.

President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi was inaugurated for his third term on April 2, and the government continues to operate with stability. Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly was reappointed in June, and a new cabinet was formed in July, with over half of its members being newly appointed ministers.

In relations with Japan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Expatriates Abdelatty, who joined the cabinet in July, visited Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting. During his visit, he paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Kishida and handed over President El-Sisi's letter. Foreign Minister Abdelatty also held two meetings with Foreign Minister Kamikawa, in which they exchanged views on bilateral relations as well as regional and international affairs and confirmed close cooperation between the two countries. In September, the Japan-Egypt-Jordan Foreign Ministers' Meeting on the Middle East was held in New York, where the three ministers discussed the regional situation, including the situation in Gaza. Furthermore, in response to the tense situation in the Middle East, including the situations in Gaza and Lebanon, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a telephone call with

Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Shoukry on April 4, and Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone call with Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdelatty on October 16.

Regarding relations with the League of Arab States, headquartered in Cairo, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States Ahmed Aboul Gheit visited Japan in July and met with Foreign Minister Kamikawa to discuss cooperative relations between Japan and the League of Arab States. In addition, the 5th Japan-Arab Economic Forum was held in Tokyo for the first time in 11 years. The event, co-hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and the League of Arab States, featured a ministerial meeting with economic ministers from League member states and a public-private conference attended by representatives from private companies.

The Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) stationed in the Sinai Peninsula, whose main mission is to supervise the implementation of the security provisions of the Egyptian-Israeli Treaty of Peace, continues to play an important role in maintaining the ceasefire between Egypt and Israel considering the destabilizing situation in the region, including the situation in Gaza. Japan provides financial support to the MFO, including funding contributions, and has dispatched Self-Defense Force personnel to the MFO since April 2019. Japan currently sends a total of four personnel, thereby continuing to contribute to peace and stability in the region.

(2) Libya

Libya is an energy powerhouse boasting the greatest oil reserves in Africa. However, after the collapse of the Qadhafi regime in 2011, the country remains unstable with political powers competing between the east and the west of the country. In April 2019, Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, commander of the eastern "Libyan National Army (LNA)," ordered an advance on Tripoli, leading to armed clashes. Since the two sides signed a permanent ceasefire agreement in October 2020, incidents of armed clashes between the eastern and western forces have significantly decreased, and the economy has been revitalizing. In September 2023, floods caused extensive damage, particularly in the eastern region of Derna, and countries including Japan provided emergency aid.



Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Expatriates of Egypt Abdelatty (August 23, Tokyo)

On the political front, a basic agreement was reached at the UN-led Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) to hold a series of national elections, including presidential elections, on December 24, 2021, but these have been postponed indefinitely and have yet to be held as of the end of 2024. In February 2023, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya Abdoulaye Bathily, announced an initiative to hold elections within the year, and efforts led by the UN have continued to proceed. However, in April 2024, he resigned, citing the lack of prospects for peace, and his successor has yet to be named. Following the Japan-Libya Summit Video Conference Meeting at the Eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 8) in August 2022, Japan reopened its embassy in Tripoli in January 2024 for the first time since it temporarily closed in July 2014, re-activating high-level exchanges of visits between the two countries. In January 2024, Vice President of the Presidential Council Abdullah Allafi visited Japan and met with Chief Cabinet Secretary Hayashi and Foreign Minister Kamikawa, where they concurred to work to revitalize bilateral relations in the future. They also exchanged views on specific measures for cooperation in areas such as the economy, business, and human resource development. In April, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs FUKAZAWA Yoichi visited Libya, paid a courtesy call on Vice President Allafi and held a Japan-Libya policy talks with Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation El-Taher El-Baour. The visit was the first political-level visit from Japan to Libya in approximately 12 years. At the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in August, Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs El-Baour held a Foreign Ministers' Meeting where they confirmed the importance of further developing Japan-Libya relations.

(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. On the other hand, the region 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.

In Tunisia, a major cabinet reshuffle was carried out with the appointment of Prime Minister Kamel Madouri in August. A presidential election was held in October, and incumbent President Kais Saied was re-elected. Regarding the economy and finances, although there have been signs that tourism, a major industry, has been recovering since the summer of 2023, attention has been focused on whether the country will be able to proceed with structural reforms in the future to address challenges such as the trade deficit, fiscal deficit, high unemployment rate, and sluggish growth rate.

In relations with Japan, State Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad Mounir Ben Rjiba visited Japan in February and met with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge and others. They concurred to use opportunities such as Expo 2025 in Osaka, Kansai, Japan, to work toward further strengthening bilateral economic relations as well as people-to-people and cultural exchanges. Furthermore, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa visited Tunisia in May and paid a courtesy call on Minister of Foreign Affairs Nabil Ammar.

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. President Tebboune was re-elected in presidential elections held in September 2024. In his second term, with his administration’s foundations now stable, he is expected to focus on economic and social policies, stating that he aims to make Algeria “Africa’s second largest economy.” In relations with Japan, economic relations are expected to become stronger with the entry into force of a bilateral tax convention in January 2024 and an agreement to establish a joint economic committee in April. In July, CEO of SONATRACH (a national hydrocarbon company) Rachid Hachichi visited Japan to attend the Japan-Arab Economic Forum. In August,

Minister of Knowledge Economy, Startups and Microenterprises Yacine El-Mahdi Oualid visited Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting. During their visits to Japan, they met with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji and exchanged views with JICA and private companies. In addition to the oil and natural gas sector, where cooperation has been progressing to date, it is expected that economic relations between the two countries will be strengthened in a wide range of areas, including new fields such as renewable energy and startups. In 2024, Algeria served alongside Japan as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council as the only Arab country and conducted a vigorous exchange of views with Japan to cooperate through multilateral frameworks. Furthermore, bilateral relations are developing in a variety of other areas, including the Japan-Algeria Manga Contest held by the Embassy of Japan in Algeria at the Algiers International Comics Festival and the attendance of a JICA mission made up of JICA experts at the African Startup Conference.

In Morocco, the second Akhannouch cabinet was inaugurated following a cabinet reshuffle in October. Morocco has been facing serious water shortages in recent years, and King Mohammed VI emphasized the need for measures in a speech in July. Meanwhile, the country is accelerating the introduction of renewable energy and infrastructure development in preparation for the 2030 FIFA World Cup. In October, at the invitation of the King, French President Emmanuel Macron paid a state visit to Morocco and affirmed his intention to promote bilateral economic cooperation toward decarbonization and to build a value chain



Foreign Minister Kamikawa, Morocco's Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates Nasser Bourita signed the Memorandum of Cooperation and shake hands (May 31, Tokyo)

through infrastructure development and the establishment of a joint industrial hub in Morocco.

In relations with Japan, Minister of Foreign Affairs Nasser Bourita visited Japan in May and held a foreign ministers' meeting and a working dinner with Foreign Minister Kamikawa and signed a "Memorandum of Cooperation for a Reinforced Partnership." In September, the two countries signed an exchange of notes for a yen loan for the "Development Policy Loan for Universal Health Coverage" (27.76 billion Japanese yen). Furthermore, Minister of Investment, Convergence and Evaluation of Public Policies Karim Zidane visited Japan in November and met with Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry MUTO Yoji, where they exchanged views toward deepening economic ties and signed a memorandum of cooperation with the aim of promoting investment and trade activities.

COLUMN

Cooperation between Japan and the League of Arab States

The League of Arab States is a regional international organization headquartered in Cairo, Egypt, with 22 Arab countries and regions as member states. The relationship between Japan and the League of Arab States has been steadily developing based on the establishment of a comprehensive mechanism for Japan-Arab cooperation built upon the Japan-Arab Economic Forum, the Japan-Arab Political Dialogue, and Japan-Arab Cultural and Educational Cooperation as a result of the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Government of Japan and the League of Arab States signed by Foreign Minister Kishida in 2013. High-level visits between Japan and the League have also become more active, and Prime Minister Kishida became the first Japanese Prime Minister to visit the League of Arab States headquarters in April 2023.

■ Japan-Arab Economic Forum

In July 2024, during the Japan-Arab Economic Forum, Japan invited Secretary General of the League of Arab States Ahmed Aboul Gheit, as a guest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and held the 5th Japan-Arab Economic Forum in Tokyo. The Ministerial Conference was attended by Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Saito from Japan, and 10 ministerial-level dignitaries, including the Secretary General on the Arab side. The Public-Private Business and Economic Conference was attended by several government officials and business people, including Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Saito, and Arab cabinet ministers. The Forum served as a networking platform to strengthen economic relations in various fields between Japan and the League of Arab States and its member states. In the face of new challenges such as achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), tackling climate change, and responding to technological developments, Japan and Arab countries reaffirmed to become partners based on mutual trust toward realizing a sustainable, resilient, and developing economy and society through human resource development in the fields of energy and digital technology.

Foreign Minister Kamikawa also took the opportunity to exchange views with the Secretary General on cooperation between Japan and the League of Arab States, as well as on regional situations.

■ Japan-Arab Political Dialogue

In September 2023, the third Japan-Arab Political Dialogue was held at the League of Arab States headquarters, where Japan and League member states discussed discovering opportunities for further political cooperation on issues of common concern and common interest in regional and international situations. Foreign Minister Hayashi co-chaired the meeting with Secretary General of the League of Arab States Aboul Gheit, where they adopted a joint statement, sharing with Arab countries the importance of a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

■ Japan-Arab Cultural and Educational Cooperation

People-to-people exchanges are being promoted in a variety of ways. As part of Japan-Arab cultural and educational cooperation, Arabic language training attachés from MOFA visit the League of Arab States headquarters to attend lectures on the origins and purpose of the League, as well as its activities in various fields such as politics, economy, and human rights. In addition, the Embassy of Japan in Egypt gives lectures on Japan's diplomatic policy in the Arab region to junior officers of the League.



The 5th Japan-Arab Economic Forum Ministerial Conference (July 11, Iikura Guest House, MOFA, Tokyo)



Arabic language training attachés from MOFA visit the League of Arab States headquarters (June 11, Cairo, Egypt)

■ Cooperation with the League of Arab States Organizations

There are 14 Arab organizations under the umbrella of the League of Arab States, covering a wide range of fields, and Japan also cooperates with these organizations for the development of the League member states. For example, Japan has provided a training vessel to the Arab Academy for Science, Technology & Maritime Transport in Alexandria, Egypt, and has supported the training of Djibouti's coast guard officers at the Academy. Japan also participated in the Arab Society for Intellectual Property Conference hosted by the Arab Administrative Development Organisation in Cairo, where it shared Japanese knowledge and discussed policies for protecting intellectual property.

Section 8

Africa

1 Overview

Africa, with a population of over 1.4 billion in 54 countries, is expected to account for a quarter of the world's population by 2050. It is a young, energetic continent full of potential. With abundant mineral resources and high economic growth rates, it is an important region in terms of Japan's economic security and securing value chains, and is also attracting global attention as a potential investment destination that should be further developed. At the same time, there are regions where peace and stability are threatened by conflicts, terrorism, and political turmoil, and they still face development challenges such as poverty and hunger.

To date, many countries and regions have held fora with Africa, including the United States (U.S.), France, Germany, the European Union (EU), Russia, China, the Republic of Korea (ROK), India, Türkiye, and Saudi Arabia. In 2024, there were numerous summit-level or ministerial-level fora with Africa, such as with Italy in January, with Nordic countries in May, with the ROK in June, with China and Indonesia in September, and with Türkiye and Russia in November. As the chair country, Italy set an agenda focused on Africa, including holding a session on “Africa, Climate Change and Development” at the G7 Apulia Summit in June. Since December, South Africa has served as the chair of the G20 and has presented an agenda that considers African development challenges, such as solidarity, equality, and sustainability, as Africa's role in the international community is becoming increasingly important.

Presidential and parliamentary elections that contributed to the consolidation and strengthening of democratic processes were held in countries such as Liberia,

Senegal, Chad, Rwanda, South Africa, Mauritius, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia and Ghana. At the same time, in West Africa, the problems of terrorism and violent extremism continue to be serious in the Sahel region.⁽¹⁾ In the Horn of Africa⁽²⁾ region, humanitarian crises are expanding as large numbers of people are being displaced due to conflicts and other factors, including in Sudan, where the armed conflict continues between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). In the Great Lakes region, particularly in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, armed groups remain active, and the human rights and humanitarian situation continue to worsen.

In February, Prime Minister Kishida met with Kenyan President William Samoei Ruto during his visit to Japan, and the two leaders concurred in working together to strengthen bilateral relations, including economic relations, promote a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP),” and enhance cooperation in the international arena. During the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in April, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a foreign ministers' meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Mauritians Abroad of Mauritania Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug. Mauritania held the chair of the African Union (AU) and Minister Merzoug was a co-chair of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) Ministerial Meeting.

In April, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Madagascar, Côte d'Ivoire, and Nigeria, and held foreign ministers' meetings in each country. In Madagascar, both sides confirmed their intention to strengthen

(1) The Sahel refers to a wide area located south of the Sahara Desert. Although there is no strict definition, it generally refers to the region including Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad.

(2) 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.

bilateral cooperation in areas such as economic security and human resource development. Additionally, in Côte d'Ivoire, Foreign Minister Kamikawa exchanged views with local women leaders, and in Nigeria she held dialogues with internally displaced women.

TICAD Ministerial Meeting was held in Tokyo in August (See the Opening Special Feature on page 8.) with representatives from 47 African countries, as well as international organizations, private companies, parliamentarians, and civil society groups participating. In preparation for the Ninth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 9), scheduled for August 2025, discussions were held on three areas: society, peace and stability, and the economy. The session on the economy featured a new panel discussion and networking session with representatives from Japanese and African companies and Ministers. A meeting with female Ministers (in the form of a working lunch) and a welcome reception were also held, and the "TICAD Ministerial Meeting Joint Communiqué," the first of its kind at a TICAD Ministerial Meeting, was adopted as an outcome document.



Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Mauritians Abroad Merzoug, co-chair of the TICAD Ministerial Meeting (August 24–25, Tokyo)

TICAD 9 is scheduled to be held in Yokohama in August 2025. To lead the international community toward cooperation amid increasing division and confrontation in the world, Japan continues to work closely with African countries to co-create innovative solutions to African and global challenges, while emphasizing "ownership" by African countries and "partnership" by the international community.

2 African Union (AU)

The African Union Commission (AUC) is the secretariat of the African Union (AU), one of the world's largest regional institutions, and it works to achieve greater political and economic integration in Africa as well as prevent and resolve conflicts.

Taking advantage of the opportunity of the AU Summit in February, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs FUKAZAWA Yoichi visited Ethiopia and held meetings and discussions with Deputy Chairperson of the AUC Monique Nsanzabaganwa, Chief Executive Officer of the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD), Nardos Bekele-Thomas, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment of the AUC, Josefa Leonel

Correia Sacko, and the Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation of the AUC, Mohamed Belhocine.

In March, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa received a courtesy call by AUC Commissioner Sacko.

Deputy Chairperson of the AUC Nsanzabaganwa participated in the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in August, and attended a working lunch for African female Ministers with Foreign Minister Kamikawa. She also held talks with the Minister.

In October, Chief Executive Officer of AUDA-NEPAD Nardos Bekele-Thomas visited Japan and paid a courtesy call on Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa.

3 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 currently hosts approximately 1.7 million refugees from neighboring countries, the largest number in Africa. In July, it was selected as the host country for the AU African Humanitarian Agency (AfHA). Uganda also contributes to stability in the Horn of Africa by, for example, deploying its military forces to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). At the TICAD Ministerial Meeting in August, State Minister for Foreign Affairs (International Relations) Henry Oryem Okello met with State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUJI Kiyoto. In November, Chief of Defence Forces of the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces Muhoozi Kainerugaba met with State Minister for Foreign Affairs FUJII Hisayuki, and both confirmed further enhancing bilateral relations and cooperation in the international arena.

(2) Ethiopia

With the second largest population in Africa (130 million), Ethiopia has great economic potential. Since July, the country has been implementing macroeconomic reforms, including currency liberalization and fiscal reforms, with support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. While sporadic fighting continues in parts of Amhara region and elsewhere, after two years have passed since the end of the conflict in the north ern part of the country, the situation is generally stable. Through meetings such as the Japan-Ethiopia Policy Consultation held in April and a meeting between State Minister of Foreign Affairs Mesganu Arga Moach, who visited Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting in August, and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji, the two countries shared the view to further develop bilateral relations in a wide range of areas, including efforts to promote peace and stability in the Horn of Africa and expand investment by Japanese companies.

(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 security, with many Japanese-related ships passing through it. The Embassy of Japan in Kenya had been accredited to Eritrea and had a dual-role consulate in the country, but, given the importance of Eritrea's role for the stability of the Horn of Africa region, it was upgraded to the Embassy of Japan in Eritrea in January 2025.

(4) Kenya

Kenya is an important like-minded country for Japan that shares fundamental values and principles such as the "rule of law." It is also the economic hub of East Africa region and one of the leading hubs of Japanese companies in Africa. In February, Prime Minister Kishida held a summit meeting with President William Samoei Ruto, who paid an Official Visit to Japan, and the two leaders concurred in working together to strengthen economic relations, promote FOIP, and strengthen cooperation in the international arena. Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Prime Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Secretary for Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs Musalia Mudavadi, who visited Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting in August, where they agreed to launch the Japan-Kenya Policy Dialogue. In January 2025, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Fujii, head of the Public Private Sector Joint Mission for Promoting Trade and Investment in



State Minister for Foreign Affairs Fujii at the Japan-Kenya Business Forum (January 16, 2025, Nairobi, Kenya)

Africa, visited Kenya and held wide-ranging discussions with government officials and business representatives from both countries toward promoting economic exchanges between the two countries.

(5) Union of Comoros

The Union of Comoros is Japan's partner and supports FOIP as a maritime nation like Japan. Under President Assoumani Azari, who was re-elected in the presidential election in January, the country has set the goal of becoming an emerging nation by 2030 under the "2030 Comoros Emerging Plan," and is promoting the development of infrastructure such as ports and the blue economy⁽³⁾ through sustainable fishing practices. In August, Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Mohamed Mbae, who was visiting Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting, where the two ministers shared the view to cooperate closely to promote FOIP.

(6) Djibouti

Djibouti is strategically located on a major trade route connecting Europe and Asia and is an important partner in realizing FOIP. Since 2009, Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF) have been engaged in anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia. The SDF base established in Djibouti in 2011 is also used for the protection and transportation of Japanese nationals abroad. In addition, in December 2024, Japan and Djibouti exchanged notes for the first Official Security Assistance (OSA) project (provision of a coastal surveillance radar system, among other items). During his visit to Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting in August, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Ali Hassan held talks with Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa and they shared the view to further develop Japan-Djibouti relations ahead of TICAD 9.

(7) Sudan

In Sudan, the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have been fighting since April

2023. More than 11 million people have been displaced both inside and outside the country, creating a serious humanitarian crisis. Japan is providing humanitarian assistance to improve the humanitarian situation in Sudan and neighboring countries and is also working toward peace and stability in the region through efforts such as those made by its Ambassador, Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa. In July, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji met with Minister of Finance and Economic Planning Gibril Ibrahim Mohamed, who was visiting Japan to attend the 5th Japan-Arab Economic Forum, and the two sides shared the view to work closely together to achieve peace and stability in the region.

(8) Seychelles

Seychelles has one of the largest economic zones in the Indian Ocean and is an important partner for realizing FOIP. In June, Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force's (JMSDF) training ships made a friendly port call at the country, followed by a destroyer in July, and the two countries conducted friendly drills. In August, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism Louis Sylvestre Radegonde visited Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting, and met with Foreign Minister Kamikawa, in which they shared the view to further develop bilateral relations and continue to cooperate in the international arena.

(9) Somalia

Peacebuilding and nation-building efforts are continuing in Somalia under President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who took office in May 2022, and Japan is supporting the efforts of the Somali government. In 2024, Japan also provided support for strengthening the capabilities of police organizations, in addition to providing humanitarian assistance to people affected by terrorist activities by the radical Islamist group Al-Shabaab and by climate change. In August, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Ahmed Moallim Fiqi visited Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting, and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Kamikawa, where they confirmed the further development of bilateral relations and

⁽³⁾ A concept to promote sustainable economic growth using marine resources.

cooperation in the international arena with Somalia, which will become a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) from 2025.

(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. In May, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji visited Tanzania, where he met with Minister for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation January Yusuf Makamba and others, and exchanged views with representatives of Japanese companies. Furthermore, at the TICAD Ministerial Meeting in August, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji met with Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation Cosato David Chumi, where the two countries shared the view to work closely together to strengthen economic ties. Furthermore, the Embassy of Japan in Tanzania co-hosted the Japan-Tanzania Business Forum in July and the Japan-Tanzania Business Dialogue in August with relevant local organizations, with the aim of supporting the expansion of Japanese companies into the country and improving the business environment.

(11) Burundi

Burundi is a landlocked country located in the central part of the African continent. Since the 1970s, Japan has been providing development cooperation to the country, such as infrastructure development at the Port of Bujumbura and improvements to basic social services. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation Albert Shingiro, who visited Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting in August, met with Foreign Minister Kamikawa, where they shared the view to cooperate to strengthen connectivity in the East African region.

(12) Madagascar

Madagascar is an island country in the Indian Ocean located off the southeastern coast of Africa that supports FOIP and is also an important supplier of mineral resources. In April, Foreign Minister Kamikawa became the first Japanese foreign minister to visit the country, paying a courtesy call on President Andry Nirina Rajoelina and meeting with Minister of Foreign



Foreign Minister Kamikawa inspects the mobile clinic during her visit to Madagascar (April 28, Antananarivo, Madagascar)

Affairs Rafaravavitaifika Rasata. The two ministers concurred on working together to promote economic resilience through cooperation in the development of a wider urban area and others by using “Co-creation for common agenda initiative” launched in the new Development Cooperation Charter. Foreign Minister Kamikawa also met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Rasata during the TICAD Ministerial Meeting in August.

(13) South Sudan

South Sudan has been in turmoil since clashes that broke out in December 2013, but a Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan was signed in September 2018. A general election based on the agreement was scheduled to be held in December 2024, but due to delays in preparations for the election, it was decided to extend the deadline for implementing the agreement by two years. Japan continues to support the peace and stability of South Sudan through development cooperation by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and support for UN Peacekeeping Operations (PKO). When Minister of Foreign Affairs Ramadan Mohammed Abdallah Goc visited Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting in August, Foreign Minister Kamikawa had a meeting with him, and stated that Japan would continue to support efforts toward stability in South Sudan.

(14) Mauritius

Mauritius, with which Japan shares fundamental values and principles, is an important partner for realizing FOIP. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration

and International Trade Maneesh Gobin, who visited Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting in August, met with Foreign Minister Kamikawa, where they shared the view to promote cooperation in the fields of maritime security and the blue economy, as well as to expand investment. In October, Mauritius reached an agreement with the United Kingdom (UK) on the issue of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, confirming that the UK would recognize Mauritius' sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, subject to the conclusion of a treaty and accompanying legal documents. National Assembly elections were held in November and the opposition coalition led by Navinchandra Ramgoolam won, bringing about a change of government.

4 Southern Africa

(1) Angola

Angola has a stable political foundation and plays an important role in regional peace and stability through active multilateral diplomacy. The country, which has abundant resources, is working to improve the business environment and promote domestic industries with the aim of diversifying and stabilizing its economy. In July, the Japan-Angola Investment Agreement came into force. In August, Minister of Industry and Commerce Rui Miguéns de Oliveira, who was visiting Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting, met with Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukuzawa and discussed enhancing cooperation with Angola, which will serve as the AU chair in 2025, toward TICAD 9. The two ministers also talked about promoting investment by Japanese companies.

(2) Eswatini

Eswatini maintains the only absolute monarchy in Africa under King Mswati III. It is also the only country in Africa that has diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla, who visited Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting in August, met with Foreign Minister Kamikawa, where they shared the view to continue cooperation in areas such as food security and education.

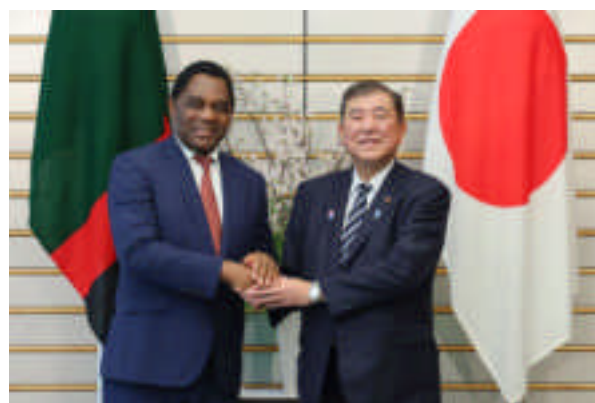
(15) Rwanda

As Rwanda marks the 30th anniversary of the genocide, efforts toward national reconciliation and economic growth are continuing under the leadership of President Paul Kagame. President Kagame was re-elected in the presidential election held in July.

In May, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji visited Rwanda and met with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Vincent Biruta. In August, he met with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation James Kabarebe, who was visiting Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting, where the two ministers shared the view to cooperate to further develop bilateral relations.

(3) Zambia

In 2024, Zambia, a country with abundant mineral resources such as copper, celebrated the 60th anniversary of its independence and the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Japan. In April, Minister of Mines and Minerals Development Paul Kabuswe visited Japan to attend a mining investment seminar. In August, Japan decided to provide an Emergency Grant Aid for food assistance to Zambia in response to the country's food insecurity. In the same month, Minister of Finance and National Planning Situmbeko Musokotwane visited Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting, and met with Foreign Minister Kamikawa, where they shared the view to cooperate to further strengthen bilateral relations,



Japan-Zambia Summit Meeting (February 6, 2025, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

including economic relations. In February 2025, President Hakainde Hichilema paid his first official working visit to Japan and held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba. The two leaders welcomed the signing of the Japan-Zambia Investment Agreement and shared the view to strengthen bilateral relations, including business relations, and deepen cooperation in the international arena.

(4) Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a key location in Southern Africa for transportation, distribution, and power transmission, and is a landlocked country with abundant mineral resources and fertile land. From August, it began serving as the chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Japan has maintained good diplomatic relations with Zimbabwe since its independence in 1980. In March, Japan made the decision to assist with the rehabilitation of the North-South Corridor, which will contribute to Zimbabwe's integration into the regional economy. In August, Japan decided to provide food aid to counter drought. Furthermore, at Japan-Zimbabwe Foreign Ministers' Meeting held during the TICAD Ministerial Meeting in August, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Frederick Musiwa Makamure Shava expressed gratitude for the assistance and discussed the stable supply of resources.

(5) Namibia

Following the sudden passing of President Hage G. Geingob in February, power was transferred peacefully to the new president, Nangolo Mbumba. In the presidential election held in November, Vice President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, candidate of the ruling South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), won.

In August, Japan made the decision to provide food aid through an Emergency Grant Aid to Namibia, which is suffering from serious drought damage. In the same month, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Peya Mushelenga, who was visiting Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting, met with Foreign Minister Kamikawa where they confirmed that they would strengthen cooperation in a wide range of fields toward industrial diversification.

(6) Botswana

Botswana held a general election on October 30, and the opposition party, Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC), won a majority in the National Assembly election, with UDC leader Duma Gideon Boko taking office as the new president on November 8. This was the first change of government since Botswana's independence in 1966, but both the electoral process and the transition of power were carried out democratically and peacefully in accordance with the provisions of the constitution.

In August, Minister of Foreign Affairs Lemogang Kwape visited Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting and held a bilateral meeting with Foreign Minister Kamikawa, in which they confirmed that they would promote cooperation in the areas of industrial diversification and human resource development, which are priorities for Botswana.

(7) Malawi

Malawi has maintained stable domestic affairs since its independence in 1964. Japan has built friendly relations with Malawi over many years, with which it shares fundamental values and principles. To mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, Japan invited Minister of Foreign Affairs Nancy Tembo to Japan as a guest of the ministry in August. Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Foreign Minister Tembo and the two shared the view to continue to cooperate in various fields, such as human resources development in the mining sector and further enhancing friendly relations through JICA volunteers, of which the largest cumulative number in the world have been dispatched to Malawi.



Japan-Malawi Foreign Ministers' Meeting (August 24, Tokyo)

(8) South Africa

In the general election held in May, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) received less than half of the votes for the first time since 1994, leading to the establishment of a Government of National Unity (GNU) with other parties. Under the reappointed President Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, the country has served as the G20 chair since December, and continues to attract interest from foreign companies, including Japanese, as an economic powerhouse in Africa, as well as a base for expanding business operations. In July, JMSDF's training ships made a port call at the country, and the two countries conducted friendly training drills. In August, Foreign Minister Kamikawa met with Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Ronald Lamola during the TICAD Ministerial Meeting, where the two countries affirmed to strengthen bilateral relations and cooperate in the international arena. In December, Minister of Electricity and Energy Kgosientsho Ramokgopa visited Japan to strengthen cooperative relations in the energy sector, including hydrogen, ammonia, and electricity.



Japan-South Africa Foreign Ministers' Meeting (August 23, Tokyo)

(9) Mozambique

Mozambique is a strategic location facing FOIP from the west as the gateway to Southeast Africa, and development by foreign capital is progressing against the

backdrop of the country's abundant natural resources such as natural gas, coal, and graphite. Due to continuing attacks by armed groups in the north, a liquefied natural gas (LNG) development project in which Japanese companies have been participating has been suspended since 2021. The Government of Japan continues to provide various forms of support to improve security. In March, the two countries confirmed the importance of working together to advance multifaceted development that will lead to the stabilization of Cabo Delgado Province and growth of the entire northern region by using the Co-creation for common agenda initiative, a first for Africa, and shared the view to continue coordinating efforts to realize this. In August, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Manuel José Gonçalves visited Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting, where he met with Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji and expressed his gratitude for Japan's cooperation in improving security in the north and for Nacala Port, which opened in October of the previous year. The two sides agreed to continue cooperation in various fields, including energy.

(10) Lesotho

Lesotho is a landlocked country with most of its land mass being mountainous. It has abundant water resources, and exports water to neighboring countries. Japan has also built cooperative relations in various fields, including providing support for the country's small hydroelectric power generation facilities. In August, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a meeting with Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Limpho Justice Tau, who was visiting Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting, where they confirmed that bilateral relations would be strengthened through the promotion of renewable energy, human resource development targeting young people, food security, the blue economy, and other areas.

COLUMN

The 60th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Zambia

In 2024, Japan and Zambia celebrated the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Zambia is a landlocked country in southern Africa that borders eight neighboring countries. Since its independence, it has maintained a stable political system and has come to be known as the “Beacon of Peace” in southern Africa. It is also known for its beautiful nature and abundant mineral resources, such as copper. In particular, Victoria Falls, located on the border with Zimbabwe and registered as a World Heritage Site, captivates visitors with its grandeur. Zambia is also known for its national parks, which are home to a diverse range of wildlife, and for being a country where traditional culture coexists with modern cities.

The friendly relations between Japan and Zambia began coinciding with Zambia gained independence in 1964. That year, the Tokyo Olympics were held in Japan, and Zambia participated under its then name of Northern Rhodesia. The closing ceremony of the Tokyo Olympics was held on October 24, the day Zambia resoundingly declared its independence, and the brand new Zambian flag was hoisted on the international stage for the first time, creating a historic moment that is unique in Olympic history.

Japan has engaged in a wide range of cooperation in numerous fields to support Zambia's economic and social development. In particular, the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Zambia, which was completed in 1986 with assistance from Japan, has served as a flagship symbolizing the friendly relations between the two countries. To date, over 200 researchers from Hokkaido University have provided training and instruction there, while students from the University of Zambia have visited Japan to obtain degrees, etc.

Numerous commemorative events were held across both countries in 2024 to mark the important milestone of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, promoting mutual understanding and deepening friendly relations between Japan and Zambia. Examples of these include the overseas traveling exhibition “NINGYO: Art and Beauty of Japanese dolls” organized by the Japan Foundation (JF) and the photo exhibition “60 Years of Cooperation and Friendship, From Japan to Zambia” organized by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), both held at the Lusaka National Museum in Zambia.



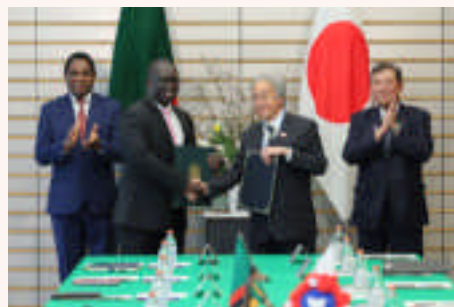
Special performance by the Japanese drum (*wadaiko*) group “SAI” (September 3, Lusaka, Zambia)

Among these, the performance in Zambia by the Japanese drum (*wadaiko*) group “SAI”¹ was an important large-scale cultural event that further strengthened the friendly relations between the two countries. From August 31 to September 3, the group performed powerful, rhythmic and dynamic Japanese drum performances to a total audience of approximately 3,200 people at four venues, and at each venue, the standing audience gave them thunderous applause. Such cultural exchange events not only helped to bring the people of Japan and Zambia closer together but also laid the foundation for building even stronger friendly relations.

In addition, the commemorative logo selected from among many entries was based on the colors of the two countries' flags and features Zambia's national bird, the African fish eagle, and Japan's national flower, the cherry blossom. It beautifully weaves together symbols of the nature, strength, and culture of both countries, embodying the pride and gratitude for the past, present, and future partnership between Japan and Zambia.



Furthermore, President Hakainde Hichilema paid his first official working visit to Japan from February 3 to 7, 2025. President Hichilema held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba, and the two leaders shared the view to further strengthen economic relations and enhance cooperation in the international arena. During the president's visit to Japan, he met with His Majesty the Emperor at the Imperial Residence. President Hichilema also attended the Japan-Zambia Business Forum and visited Japanese companies. The visit was also an opportunity to sign the Japan-Zambia Investment Agreement, providing momentum for further strengthening bilateral relations in light of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2024.



Presentation of the signed investment agreement at Japan-Zambia Summit Meeting (February 6, 2025, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

- ¹ For more information on the 60th anniversary events taking place in Zambia, including this performance, please visit the official Facebook page of the Embassy of Japan in Zambia (updated regularly): https://www.facebook.com/JAPANinZAMBIA/?locale=ja_JP



5 Central Africa

(1) Gabon

The interim government that was inaugurated in August 2023 is steadily progressing with the process of transferring power to civilian rule toward the presidential election scheduled to be held in 2025 as it conducted a national dialogue in April and a national referendum on a new constitutional proposal in November, both of which were peaceful and transparent. Japan is supporting Gabon's transition to civilian rule through measures such as strengthening the country's judicial system, including the signing and exchange of notes in July regarding the grant aid project "The Project for Promoting an Accountable, Effective and Inclusive Justice Sector (in cooperation with UNDP)."

(2) Cameroon

Cameroon remains under the long-running administration of President Paul Biya. The government continues to work towards resolving issues in English-speaking regions.

In March, Japan signed and exchanged notes regarding the grant aid project "The Project for Promoting Sustainability and Strengthening International Competitiveness of Domestic Products by Enhancing Advanced Technologies" (in cooperation with UNIDO).

Minister of External Relations Lejeune Mbella Mbella attended the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in August and held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Kamikawa.

(3) Democratic Republic of the Congo

President Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo began his second term in office in January. Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa attended the presidential inauguration ceremony later that month as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy and held talks with the president.

Japan is promoting cooperation on socio-economic development of the country, including infrastructure support in areas such as transportation and electricity.

In the eastern region, activities by armed groups have led to the internal displacement of people and a worsening human rights and humanitarian situation, resulting in the deployment of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). Japan is providing assistance through the reestablishment of a local policing model.

Delegated Minister to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie



Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa pays a courtesy call on President Tshisekedi at the Democratic Republic of the Congo presidential inauguration ceremony (January 20, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo)

in charge of Cooperation and Francophonie Bestine Kazadi Ditabala, attended the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in August and held talks with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji.

Mpox infections began to spread around the fall of 2023, and in August 2024, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). In response to a request from the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Japan signed and exchanged notes with the government of the country in September regarding the donation of vaccines and other supplies.

(4) Republic of Congo

The Republic of Congo is home to the vast Congo Basin and is actively working to address climate change issues, including forest conservation.

As food security measures are an urgent issue, Japan continues to provide food aid to the country through the United Nations World Food Program (WFP).

(5) Sao Tome and Principe

Sao Tome and Principe has a rich natural environment and is focusing on the environment, such as ecotourism. In December, it graduated from being a least developed country (LDC). The Government of Japan continues to provide food aid, and the counterpart funds⁽⁴⁾ accumulated in return for food aid are used to promote the country's economic and social development.

(6) Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea remains under the long-running administration of President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo. Japan appointed Francisco Esono Mba Onguene as its first Honorary Consul in Malabo.

In February, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa met with Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Simeón Oyono Esono Angue during his visit to Ethiopia for the AU Assembly.

Secretary of State for International Organizations Mari-Cruz Evna Andeme attended the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in August and held talks with Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa.

(7) Chad

Chad held a presidential election in May and interim President Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno was inaugurated as president. A national assembly election was held in December, which was an important part of the process towards the country's transition to civilian rule.

In February, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Mahamat Saleh Annadif during his visit to Ethiopia for the AU Assembly.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Abderaman Koulamallah attended the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in August and held talks with Foreign Minister Kamikawa.

Japan values and encourages the role that Chad plays in maintaining peace and stability in the Sahel and Lake Chad regions and continues to provide food aid. Japan also supports the host communities (host areas) facing an increasing burden due to the acceptance of refugees and displaced persons from neighboring countries, including Sudanese refugees.

(8) Central African Republic

There are numerous anti-government armed groups in the Central African Republic where the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) is deployed. Although the security and humanitarian

⁽⁴⁾ The recipient government is required to deposit a certain amount of surplus local currency generated when the Japanese government provides aid funds (foreign currency) in a local currency bank account (counterpart funds). The recipient government may use the counterpart funds for projects and procurement of goods that contribute to economic and social development, after discussing the use of the funds with the Japanese government through its diplomatic missions overseas.



TICAD Ministerial Meeting Female Ministers Working Lunch (August 23, Tokyo)

situation is improving, there remain a large number of internally displaced persons.

In September, Japan signed and exchanged notes for grant aid for food aid in collaboration with the United Nations World Food Program (WFP).

Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad Sylvie Baïpo-Temon attended the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in August, where she attended a working lunch with African female ministers hosted by Foreign Minister



Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Matsumoto speaking at the 3rd Japan-Africa Public-Private Economic Forum (December 16, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire)

Kamikawa and held a foreign ministers' meeting with her. In December, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs MATSUMOTO Hisashi attended the 3rd Japan-Africa Public-Private Economic Forum held in Côte d'Ivoire and met with Minister in charge of Trade and Industry Thierry Patrick Akoloza.

6 West Africa

(1) Ghana

The Akufo-Addo administration, which started its second term from 2021, has promoted investment and industrial diversification, as well as focused on revitalizing the domestic economy, including the debt situation.

Japan continues to support Ghana in a wide range of areas, including infectious disease control through the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research.

In January, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa visited Ghana and paid a courtesy call on Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey.

Minister Botchwey attended the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in August, where she attended a working lunch for African female ministers hosted by Foreign Minister Kamikawa, and held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Kamikawa.

A presidential election was held in December, and

former President John Dramani Mahama was elected president. The vote was conducted peacefully without any major disturbance, highlighting the maturity of democracy in the country.

(2) Cabo Verde

Cabo Verde has a well-established democracy and enjoys a high degree of political stability.

In January, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji met with Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation Miryan Djamila Sena Vieira, who was visiting Japan, and the two sides confirmed that they would cooperate on regional and global issues through fora such as TICAD and the United Nations (UN).

Additionally, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Regional Integration Rui Alberto de Figueiredo Soares attended the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in August and held talks with Foreign Minister Kamikawa.

(3) The Gambia

The Gambia is pursuing reforms based on fundamental values and principles such as democracy and the rule of law. At the same time, it faces social issues such as a fragile economic structure dependent on agriculture and serious poverty.

In order to contribute to stabilizing the country's food supply, Japan signed and exchanged notes in August regarding grant aid for food aid.

(4) Guinea

In Guinea, a transitional process to civilian rule is underway under a transitional government that was established in September 2021. Guinea has abundant water resources and fertile land. It is also a major producer of mineral resources such as bauxite and iron.

Japan has been friendly relations with Guinea over the years, and to support the country's sustainable development, the two sides signed and exchanged notes in April regarding support for the development of economic infrastructure, and in August regarding grant aid for food aid.

During the 3rd Japan-Africa Public-Private Economic Forum held in Côte d'Ivoire in December, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Matsumoto met with Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Ismaël Nabé.

(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. Japan provides food aid and other support to Guinea-Bissau.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Communities Carlos Pinto Pereira, attended the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in August and held talks with Foreign Minister Kamikawa. During the 3rd Japan-Africa Public-Private Economic Forum held in Côte d'Ivoire in December, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Matsumoto met with Minister of Economy, Planning and Regional Integration Soares Sambu.

(6) Côte d'Ivoire

In February, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa met with Minister for National



Foreign Minister Kamikawa inspecting the new maternal and child health care annex of the University Hospital Center of Cocody (April 29, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire)

Education and Literacy Mariatou Koné, during his visit to Ethiopia for the AU Assembly.

In April, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Côte d'Ivoire, where she paid a courtesy call on President Alassane Ouattara and met with Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration and Ivorians Abroad Kacou Houadja Léon Adom. Foreign Minister Kamikawa also inspected the new maternal and child health care annex of the University Hospital Center of Cocody, the largest hospital in Côte d'Ivoire, which was constructed and renovated with assistance from Japan, and met with women leaders of the country.

In June, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs KOMURA Masahiro met with Minister of Animal and Fishery Resources Sidi Tiémoko Touré, who was visiting Japan.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration and Ivorians Abroad Kacou Houadja Léon Adom attended the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in August and held talks with Foreign Minister Kamikawa.

In December, the 3rd Japan-Africa Public-Private Economic Forum was held in Côte d'Ivoire, where Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Matsumoto gave a speech to economic ministers from African countries and numerous private companies from Japan and Africa. The Vice-Minister also met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Adom and visited the Shinzo Abe / Japan-Côte d'Ivoire Friendship Intersection, which was constructed with Japanese assistance, the new maternal and child health care annex of the University Hospital Center of Cocody, and the Centre for the Promotion of Japanese Language

Education and Japanese Studies (Japan Corner) at the Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, among other sites.

Côte d'Ivoire is scheduled to hold a presidential election in October 2025. To support the election, Japan signed and exchanged notes in October regarding the grant aid project "The Project for Preventing Conflicts related to Election and Promoting the Political Participation of Women and Vulnerable People (in cooperation with the UNDP)."

(7) Sierra Leone

President Julius Maada Bio, who was re-elected in 2023, has made food security, human resource development, youth support, and technology promotion his domestic policy priorities.

During the United Nations Security Council Ministerial Meeting held in New York in March, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Frances Piagie Alghali paid a courtesy call on Foreign Minister Kamikawa.

Japan and Sierra Leone signed and exchanged notes on assistance for improving agricultural productivity in May and on grant aid for food aid in August.

Also, Deputy Minister Alghali participated in the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in August and attended a working lunch with African female ministers hosted by Foreign Minister Kamikawa. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji held a meeting with Sierra Leone's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

(8) Senegal

In the presidential election held in March, Bassirou Diomaye Faye, the opposition candidate, was elected for the first time. The vote was conducted peacefully without any major disturbance, highlighting the maturity of democracy in the country.

In January, Minister of Economy, Planning and Cooperation Doudou Ka, visited Japan and held talks with Foreign Minister Kamikawa. Japan and Senegal also signed and exchanged notes regarding grant aid in the fisheries sector.

In February, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa met with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad Ismaïla Madior Fall, during his visit to Ethiopia for the AU General Assembly.

In July, Japan signed and exchanged notes with Senegal regarding four grant aid projects in the fields of human resources development, health, landmine clearance, and food aid. In the same month, the JMSDF's training ships *Kashima* and *Shimakaze* called at the port of Dakar and conducted friendly drills with the Senegalese Navy.

Minister of African Integration and Foreign Affairs Yassine Fall attended the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in August, where she participated in a working lunch with African female ministers hosted by Foreign Minister Kamikawa and held talks with her.

(9) Togo

In Togo, agriculture accounts for about 40% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), and about 70% of the workforce is employed in the sector.

In May, Japan signed and exchanged notes with Togo regarding the Economic and Social Development Program, a grant aid project to provide agricultural civil engineering equipment (tractors, bulldozers, etc.). Also, in August, notes were signed and exchanged regarding grant aid to provide food aid with Japanese government rice.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and Togolese Abroad Robert Dussey, attended the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in August and held talks with Foreign Minister Kamikawa.

(10) Nigeria

In August, protests broke out across the country against the backdrop of soaring prices, but reform efforts towards sustainable economic growth progressed, including the start of domestic supply of domestically refined gasoline in September.

Japan is providing assistance to communities in three northeastern states that are facing threats such as terrorism to enhance governance and provide support to improve access to basic health services.

In April, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Nigeria and held a bilateral meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Yusuf Maitama Tuggar. She also exchanged views on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) with female executives of UN agencies and female displaced persons.

Minister Tuggar attended the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in August and held talks with



Japan-Nigeria Foreign Ministers' Meeting (August 23, Tokyo)

Foreign Minister Kamikawa. The two sides shared the view to strengthen partnership in the economic field.

(11) Niger

Following the military takeover of power in July 2023, Japan is calling for efforts toward the early restoration of constitutional order in Niger, while providing support through international organizations to improve the humanitarian situation.

(12) Burkina Faso

Following the military takeovers of power in January 2022 and September that year, a transitional government was established and is working towards a transition to civilian rule. The security situation has seriously deteriorated, with frequent terrorist attacks and assaults occurring in rural areas, resulting in a large number of internally displaced persons.

To contribute to the improvement of the humanitarian situation, Japan signed and exchanged notes with Burkina Faso, regarding grant assistance for food aid in October. In particular, Japan is also working to provide assistance to internally displaced persons through food aid with Japanese government rice.

(13) Benin

As terrorist groups in the Sahel region move south, enhancing security measures in northern Benin has become an urgent task.

Japan is deepening bilateral relations through infrastructure development, industrial promotion, and improving the living environment of its people. Also, Japan is supporting Benin's green growth efforts through cooperation in the electricity sector.

In July, Minister of Economy and Finance Romuald Wadagni visited Japan and met with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Olushegun Adjadi Bakari attended the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in August and held talks with Foreign Minister Kamikawa.

(14) Mali

Following the military takeovers of power in August 2020 and May 2021, a transitional government was established and is working towards a transition to civilian rule. Even after the withdrawal of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), terrorism, attacks and clashes have occurred frequently, particularly in the north and east, and the security and humanitarian situation has worsened.

Japan is providing cooperation in areas such as education and food security to promote peace, stability, and sustainable growth in Mali.

(15) Liberia

President Joseph Nyumah Boakai took office in January. Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa attended the presidential inauguration ceremony that month as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy and paid a courtesy calls on the president and Minister of State for Presidential Affairs Sylvester M. Grigsby.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Sara Beysolow Nyanti attended the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in August and held talks with Foreign Minister Kamikawa.

Japan has been supporting efforts to address development challenges by developing quality infrastructure and other efforts. Also, in September, Japan signed and exchanged notes on grant aid for food aid.

(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.

A presidential election was held in June and President Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani was re-elected.

Japan has continuously provided assistance such as food aid, and 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.

Mauritania served as the AU chair in 2024. In April, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a bilateral meeting with Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Mauritanians Abroad, during her visit to Italy. Also, Minister

Merzoug acted as the co-chair of the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in August and held a bilateral meeting with Foreign Minister Kamikawa. During the 3rd Japan-Africa Public-Private Economic Forum held in Côte d'Ivoire in December, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Matsumoto met with Minister Delegate to the Minister of Economy and Finance, Responsible for the Budget Codioro Moussa N'Guenore.

Chapter 3

Japan's Foreign Policy to Promote National and Global Interests

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Section

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, thereby leading to situations of unjustifiable infringement of principles such as freedom of navigation and freedom of overflight.

Under these circumstances, grey zone situations over territories, cross-border cyberattacks on critical civilian infrastructures, and information warfare in the cognitive domain 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 systems including the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology and its Implementation Guidelines; development of systems for the introduction and implementation 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, and the Implementation Guidelines underwent further partial revision in March, in order to enable the transfer of defense equipment and technology across a wide

range of fields, and at the same time, to conduct more strict examinations on transfers. Regarding the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP), a joint development program for next-generation fighter aircraft by Japan, the UK, and Italy, the three countries signed the Convention on the Establishment of the “Global Combat Air Programme – GCAP International Government Organisation (GIGO)” in December 2023 to establish an international organization for the management and operation of the Programme, and the Convention entered into force in December.

(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,” a domestic legislation, 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 2023, Japan escorted the U.S. Forces and other troops a total of 137 times on occasions such as joint exercises, intelligence and surveillance operations, including ballistic missile warnings. 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, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (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 personnel 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.

At the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting held during Prime Minister Kishida's official visit to the U.S. in April, President Joseph Biden reiterated unwavering U.S. commitment to the defense of Japan. The two leaders also declared new strategic initiatives including upgrade of command and control frameworks, holding of the Defense Industrial Cooperation, Acquisition, and Sustainment (DICAS) Forum that includes co-development, co-production, and co-sustainment within its scope, and holding of ministerial meeting on extended deterrence.⁽¹⁾ Furthermore, they issued instructions to further deepen concrete discussions on Japan-U.S. cooperation in the field of security through the Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (Japan-U.S. “2+2”).

The Japan-U.S. “2+2” was held in Tokyo in July, and was attended by Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Defense Minister KIHARA Minoru from Japan, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin from the U.S. Recognizing that Prime Minister Kishida's official visit to the U.S. in April was historic in bringing the Japan-U.S. Alliance to an unprecedented level, both sides reaffirmed their

intent to implement new strategic initiatives following the official visit, with the vision to build a global partnership for the future, including upgrading Alliance command and control, deepening defense industry and advanced technology cooperation, and enhancing cross-domain operations. The first Japan-U.S. ministerial meeting on extended deterrence was also convened. The two sides engaged in in-depth discussions at the ministerial level on cooperation to further strengthen extended deterrence, and affirmed that they will continue enhancing discussions on extended deterrence at various levels, primarily through the Japan-U.S. Extended Deterrence Dialogue (EDD). The ministers also underscored their support for the global partnership goals on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), and affirmed that realizing a free and open Indo-Pacific requires the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in leadership positions as well as their contributions toward conflict prevention, reconstruction, and peacebuilding.

In December, Prime Minister Ishiba received a courtesy call by Secretary of Defense Austin on the occasion of his visit to Japan. Prime Minister Ishiba expressed gratitude for Secretary Austin's past contribution to strengthening the Japan-U.S. Alliance, and stated that Japan and the U.S. must work together to further strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the alliance, in order to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific amidst the increasingly severe security environment.

On February 7, 2025, Prime Minister Ishiba, during his visit to Washington D.C., held a Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting with President Donald J. Trump. The two leaders concurred to strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance and to work closely to address strategic challenges in the region that both countries are facing. Prime Minister Ishiba also expressed Japan's unwavering commitment to fundamentally strengthen Japan's defense capabilities, which President Trump welcomed. Furthermore, President Trump underscored the unwavering commitment by the U.S. to the defense of Japan, using its full range of capabilities including nuclear. The two leaders reaffirmed that Article V of the Japan-U.S. Treaty

⁽¹⁾ Providing deterrence that a country possesses to its allies and partners. Japan possesses its own deterrence while also receiving extended deterrence from its ally, the U.S..

of Mutual Cooperation and Security applies to the Senkaku Islands.

In 2024, Japan continued to engage in personnel exchanges with senior U.S. defense officials, including successive visits to Japan by General Charles A. Flynn, Commanding General, U.S. Army Pacific, Admiral Stephen Koehler, Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet (PACFLT), and Admiral John C. Aquilino, Commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command in April; Admiral Samuel Paparo, Commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command in May; General Charles Q. Brown, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of Defense Austin in July; Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth in August; Admiral Samuel Paparo, Commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command in October; General Mahoney, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps in November; Secretary of Defense Austin and Lt Gen. James F. Glynn, Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific in December.

Discussions on extended deterrence are also being intensified in the Japan-U.S. Extended Deterrence Dialogue (EDD). 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 F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming in June, the U.S. reaffirmed its commitment to enhance the regional deterrent effect of U.S. nuclear assets. The two sides explored avenues to enhance joint deterrence capabilities of both countries in an integrated manner to deepen Alliance political, diplomatic, and defense cooperation and further prepare the Alliance to defend against potential attacks and deter nuclear use. Both sides also reiterated their pledge to improve coordination and strengthen the Alliance's capabilities and posture against adversary missile threats. As a part of these discussions, the delegations received an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) wing mission brief before touring the missile procedures trainer, where U.S. Air Force missile combat crews conduct

training on ICBM launch procedures, and a training launch facility, where ICBM maintenance professionals train on maintaining the Minuteman III ICBM weapons system. In addition, as mentioned previously, the first Japan-U.S. ministerial meeting on extended deterrence was convened in July.

At the EDD held at MOFA in December, the two sides shared assessments of challenges to regional security, and particularly in the face of the dynamic reality surrounding nuclear capabilities, reiterated their shared resolve to further strengthen extended deterrence, bolstered by Japan's capabilities. In this context, the two sides discussed how to improve policy coordination and alignment of defense capabilities to deter and, if necessary, respond to aggression against the Alliance and in the region. Furthermore, they deepened discussion on the relationship between nuclear and non-nuclear military matters within the Alliance, on coordinating deterrence messaging and escalation management practices during both peacetime and contingencies, and on bilateral coordination through the Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM) throughout every phase of a developing situation. The delegations visited the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) Camp Kengun in Kumamoto Prefecture and observed the Japan-U.S.-Australia command post exercise "Yama Sakura 87" (YS-87) and JGSDF assets such as the Type-12 surface-to-ship guided missile and Network Electronic Warfare System.

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 its efforts to effectively counter new airborne threats, including hypersonic weapons, and at the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting in August 2023, announced the decision to initiate the joint development of Glide Phase Interceptor (GPI). In May, Japan and the U.S. signed the Project Arrangement for the joint development of

GPI. In the Japan-U.S. Joint Leaders' Statement issued in April, the two countries reviewed their approach to the sharing of information to counter missile threats, including announcing their "vision to cooperate on a networked air defense architecture among the U.S., Japan, and Australia."

C Cyberspace

In light of the necessity for cross-governmental efforts by both Japan and the U.S., the 9th Japan-U.S. Cyber Dialogue was convened in June, where participants engaged in wide-ranging discussions on Japan-U.S. cooperation on cyber-related matters, including cyber policies in both countries, cooperation in the international arena and bilateral cooperation. At the Japan-U.S. "2+2" held in July, the two countries concurred on strengthening cooperation in the context of strengthening Alliance deterrence and response capabilities. 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 2023, 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 advance space cooperation in the field of security such as mutual exchanges of information in the field of Space Domain Awareness and others, cooperation on hosted payloads (mission instruments loaded onto other entities' satellites), and cooperation on space capabilities including Low Earth Orbit (LEO) detection and tracking constellation for strategic threats such as long-range missiles and hypersonic glide vehicles.

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 July.

(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 Japan-U.S. "2+2" issued in July, the two sides reiterated their firm commitment to the steady implementation of such realignment of U.S. forces in Japan. This Statement emphasized the importance of optimizing Alliance force posture to address increasing security challenges in the region and be better postured to meet these challenges in the future. To this end, ministers welcomed the U.S. plan to modernize its tactical aircraft laydown across Japan, which reflects capability investments to enhance the Japan-U.S. Alliance and bolster regional deterrence. At the same time, they celebrated the U.S. redesignation of the 12th Marine Regiment to the 12th Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR), and the steady implementation of the MLR reorganization toward initial operational capability by 2025. Furthermore, they welcomed the forward deployment and return of the USS George Washington to Japan, and its critical role in supporting Alliance deterrence. Regarding the relocation of Marine Corps personnel from Okinawa to Guam, it was confirmed in the Statement that the relocation would begin in 2024, and the commencement of relocation was officially announced on December 14.

In particular, the return of lands in Okinawa has been moving forward based on the April 2013 "Consolidation Plan for Facilities and Areas in Okinawa" ("Okinawa Consolidation Plan"), 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

■ Realignment of USFJ – An Overview

(Okinawa)

Relocation of MCAS Futenma

- Replacement facility will be constructed in Camp Schwab-Henokosaki and adjacent waters.
- KC-130 was relocated to Iwakuni (completed in August 2014).
- Relocation of aircraft handling functions for emergency purposes to Tsuiki and Nyutabaru Air Bases

Relocation of U.S. Marine Corps personnel to locations outside of Japan

- Approx. 9,000 (at capacity) U.S. Marine Corps from Okinawa to locations outside of Japan
- End-State for the U.S. Marine Corps forces in Okinawa will be consistent with the levels envisioned in the Roadmap.
- Starting 2024, U.S. Marine Corps personnel began relocating from Okinawa to Guam

- Facility and infrastructure development costs for relocation to Guam
- Overall cost: 8.6 billion U.S. dollars (provisional estimate by the U.S. Government)
- Japan's costs: 2.8 billion U.S. dollars in US FY 2008.

Kyogamisaki Communications Site
TPY-2 radar installation (December 2014)

Return of land south of Kadena

Consolidation plan on return of land south of Kadena was released in April 2013 and time of return for the following facilities and areas was specified:

- Camp Kuwae (Total return)
- Makiminato Service Area (Total return)
- Futenma Air Station (Total return)
- Naha Port (Total return)
- Army POL Depot Kuwae Tank Farm (Total return)
- Camp Zukeran (Partial return)

Total area is approximately 220 times of Tokyo Dome

(Mainland Japan)

- Relocation of U.S. Forces' aviation training exercises in Japan has been conducted since 2006 (Chitose, Misawa, Hyakuri, Komatsu, Tsuiki, and Nyutabaru).
- Agreement on aviation training relocation to Alaska, U.S. in 2023
- Agreement on aviation training relocation to Guam and other locations in 2011 (Training relocation was implemented 151 times as of the end of December 2024).

- Training relocation of MV-22 Ospreys, etc. at MCAS Futenma outside of Okinawa was implemented from FY 2016 (22 times as of the end of December 2024)

Shariki Communications Site
TPY-2 radar installation (June 2006)

Yokota Air Base

- Relocation of JASDF Air Defense Command HQ from Fuchu (March 2012)

Camp Zama

- Reorganization of U.S. Army Japan HQ (US FY 2008)
- Relocation of Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) Central Readiness Force (CRF) Command HQ from Asaka (JFY 2012)

Naval Air Facility Atsugi

- Completion relocation of carrier air wing from Atsugi to Iwakuni (March 2018)

MCAS Iwakuni

- Development of Mageshima Base (tentative name) (also to be used as a site for Field-Carrier Landing Practice (FCLP) facility) is conducted.

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

Okinawa Consolidation Plan was achieved with the return of a portion of the Facilities and Engineering Compound in Camp Zukeran in March 2020. 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. At the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting convened in February 2025, the two leaders confirmed their commitment to the steady implementation of the realignment of U.S. Forces in Japan in accordance with the Okinawa Consolidation Plan, including the construction of the Futenma Replacement Facility at Henoko and the return of Marine Corps Air Station (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 (SDF) 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 local residents living in the vicinity and to gain their understanding and support regarding the stationing of U.S. Forces. The Government of Japan, taking into consideration the requests from local communities, has been making utmost efforts in areas such as preventing incidents and accidents involving U.S. Forces, abating the noise of 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 July, Japan and the U.S. emphasized the importance of continued bilateral coordination to ensure the sharing of information in a timely manner, and in the spirit of alliance cooperation, positively evaluated efforts to be implemented by the U.S. Forces in Japan to prevent unacceptable incidents and behavior. In matters related to the environment, ministers discussed enhancing bilateral environmental cooperation, including on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) issues.

MOFA 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 are aimed at deepening mutual understanding through cultural and educational exchanges among Japanese and American junior and senior high school students, and have been conducted continuously at U.S. Forces' facilities and schools in various parts of Japan, with the cooperation of local governments in the vicinity and U.S. Forces in Japan. (See the Column on page 199.) In addition, in Okinawa where there

is a concentration of U.S. Forces' facilities and areas, the "TOFU: Think of Okinawa's Future in the United States" program has been implemented since FY2017 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. The program served as an opportunity for participants to cultivate an international perspective through visits to Tokyo, Washington, D.C., and New York, exchanges of opinions with key government officials, and tours of government facilities. (See the Column on page 199.)

(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. (Note that the status of U.S. forces that form a part of the UN forces is governed by the relevant agreements implemented made pursuant to the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty.) 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 October 2023, General Paul J. LaCamera (Commander, UNC/Combined Forces Command/United States Forces Korea) paid a courtesy call on Foreign Minister Kamikawa. Foreign

Minister Kamikawa expressed her appreciation for the surveillance activities against illegal ship-to-ship transfers⁽²⁾ 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.

COLUMN

Sowing the “SEED” for the Future of Japan and the U.S. — Japan-U.S. Exchange Programs through English (SEED/TOFU)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) conducts exchange programs in municipalities where the U.S. Forces' facilities and areas are located, in order to sow the “SEED” for the future of Japan and the U.S. and make it flourish. The Student Educational Exchange and Dialogue (SEED) project was implemented at seven locations across Japan in FY2024 (Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni; Yokota Air Base; Camp Kuwae; U.S. Fleet Activities, Yokosuka; Camp Zama; Misawa Air Base; and U.S. Fleet Activities, Sasebo). This initiative is named “SEED” with the hope that the project will nurture talents who will play an active role in the international community by providing opportunities for Japanese junior and senior high school students and American students living in the U.S. Forces' facilities and areas to interact in English and deepen mutual understanding. TAKAHASHI Ryo, who participated in the project at U.S. Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, is one such valued “SEED.”

■ TAKAHASHI Ryo, second year student at the Yokosuka School for the Deaf

I participated in the SEED project held on November 2 and 3 at U.S. Fleet Activities, Yokosuka. I took part in this project as I felt it would be a good opportunity to interact with American students in English.

I am hearing impaired and live with cochlear implants in both ears. Some of the American students' English pronunciation was different from the English pronunciation that I usually hear in my classes, so I had to strain to understand it. However, since I have been working hard on my English studies, I was able to understand some of the conversations in English that the American students had.

While sharing ideas with my teammates in English, I introduced products made with local resources. As I delivered a presentation in front of those who have supported the SEED project as well as the American students, I felt so nervous that my heart was pounding. Also, I was able to make American friends for the first time.

Participating in the project made me realize that my English proficiency is still not good enough. I am now even more motivated to work harder in the future so that I can speak with people from all over the world. Despite being hearing impaired, I was able to gain experience by challenging myself. Going forward, I would like to continue learning English, never giving it up.



Takahashi receiving a completion certificate as the representative of the participating students (November 3, Yokosuka City, Kanagawa Prefecture)



Commemorative photo of the SEED participants at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni (September 8, Iwakuni City, Yamaguchi Prefecture)

(2) 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.

MOFA also runs the “TOFU: Think of Okinawa's Future in the United States” program for Okinawa Prefecture, where there is a concentration of the U.S. Forces' facilities and areas. This initiative aims to promote mutual understanding between Japan and the U.S. by providing students from, or residing in, Okinawa Prefecture with an opportunity to have a first-hand experience in the U.S.

In March, the program participants paid courtesy calls on Chief Cabinet Secretary Hayashi and Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, HOSAKA Yasushi, and received encouragement from them. Thereafter, they visited Washington, D.C. and New York. After returning to Japan, they participated in a final presentation to report the outcome of the program to various relevant stakeholders in Okinawa Prefecture in May. In June, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Okinawa Prefecture and met with the participants of the TOFU program, and she encouraged them to play an active role to bear responsibility for the future of Okinawa Prefecture. This initiative has been welcomed and highly commended in Okinawa Prefecture and elsewhere.

Such investments in future generations contribute to fostering the people-to-people connections that underpin the Japan-U.S. Alliance. MOFA, in cooperation with municipalities where the U.S. Forces' facilities and areas are located, will continue to support the development of the younger generation.



TOFU program participants at a meeting with Georgetown University students (March 23, Washington, D.C., U.S.)



TOFU program final presentation (May 11, Ginowan City, Okinawa Prefecture)

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 ally 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 a focus on cooperation with like-minded countries, toward further deepening the “Special Strategic Partnership” between the two countries and realizing a “FOIP.” At the eleventh Japan-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations (“2+2”) convened in September, Japan and Australia concurred on working unwaveringly to deepen Australia-Japan strategic and security cooperation, including all tools of statecraft, in line with the Australia-Japan Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation (JDSC)⁽³⁾ issued in 2022. Japan and Australia are steadily strengthening security

⁽³⁾ A document that sets out the direction for the next 10 years of Japan-Australia security cooperation, signed at the Japan-Australia Summit Meeting in October 2022.

cooperation by utilizing the Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement that entered into force in 2023. For example, under this Agreement, the Australian Defence Force participated in Exercise Keen Sword 25, a joint Japan-U.S. exercise, for the first time in October. With regard to illicit maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers, the Australian Defence Force conducted monitoring and surveillance operations in the waters around Japan with their naval vessels from early to mid-May and from early to mid-September, and with their aircraft from early to mid-February and from early to mid-November.

Japan and India have concurred, at the leaders' and foreign ministerial levels, to further diversify and deepen bilateral relations across a wide range of fields, including economy, security, and people-to-people exchanges, in order to further develop the "Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership." At the Third Japan-India 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting convened in August, the Ministers discussed cooperation toward the realization of FOIP, bilateral security and defense cooperation, as well as regional and global issues, and concurred to continue to work closely together. In November, Japan and India signed a Memorandum of Implementation for transfer of Unified Complex Radio Antenna (UNICORN) based on their reciprocal Agreement Concerning the Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology, and held the inaugural Japan-India Dialogue on Economic Security, including Strategic Trade and Technology.

In regard to the Republic of Korea (ROK), the two sides concurred, at the Japan-ROK Security Dialogue held in November, to deepen mutual understanding of their respective security and defense policies, and to communicate closely toward enhancing Japan-ROK security and defense cooperation. Furthermore, based on the recognition that Japan-ROK relations are important in the current strategic environment, they agreed that Japan and the ROK, as well as Japan, the U.S., and the ROK, will continue to work closely together on matters, including responding to North Korea, taking advantage of various international conferences and other opportunities, and holding talks between leaders, foreign ministers, defense ministers, and heads of the national security agencies. Japan and the ROK are also advancing further trilateral cooperation to address

regional security issues, including Freedom Edge, the first multi-domain joint exercise among Japan, the U.S., and the ROK (June and November), and other joint trilateral exercises (January, April, November). The Japan-U.S.-ROK Trilateral Diplomacy Working Group for Foreign Ministry Cooperation on North Korea's Cyber Threats was held in December 2023, March and September 2024, during which the three countries reaffirmed that they will continue to work closely, including in the cyber area.

In relation to the UK, which is Japan's "enhanced global strategic partner," defense cooperation is advancing with the application of the Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) that entered into force in October 2023. In April, the UK Royal Navy patrol vessel, HMS *Spey*, made a port visit to Japan, a fact that was touched on at the Japan-UK Foreign Ministers' Meeting convened in the same month. The HMS *Spey* conducted monitoring and surveillance operations on illicit maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers, from mid- to late June. Later, at the Japan-UK Defense Ministers Meeting in July, the Ministers announced that the defense authorities had reached an agreement to apply Japan Self Defense Forces' Asset Protection Measures to the UK. In September, the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF) training vessels JS *Kashima* and JS *Shimakaze* visited ports in London and Southampton, UK, and conducted bilateral exercise with the UK Royal Navy patrol vessel, HMS *Tyne*, in the English Channel. These port visits mark the first instances of the application of the Japan-UK RAA to the SDF. The 8th Japan-UK Cyber Dialogue took place in the same month, where the participants exchanged opinions on a wide range of issues, including each country's cybersecurity strategy and policy, cooperation in the international fora including the UN, and capacity building for cybersecurity. Japan, the UK, and Italy signed the Convention on the Establishment of the "Global Combat Air Programme – GCAP International Government Organisation (GIGO)" in December 2023. The Convention entered into force on December 10, with the deposition of the last instrument of ratification completed for Japan in July, the UK in October, and Italy in December.

With France, which Japan is bound by an "Exceptional Partnership," the Seventh Japan-France

Foreign and Defense Ministers' Meeting ("2+2") took place in May 2023. In addition to affirming that it is essential to further strengthen cooperation between Japan and France, as like-minded countries, in both diplomacy and defense, the Ministers concurred on further promoting cooperation in addressing various regional and global issues, in order to maintain and strengthen the free and open international order based on the rule of law. The four ministers also exchanged views on Japanese-French cooperation in areas such as cyber, space, and economic security, 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 Cyber security were convened in November 2023, at which the two sides exchanged views on broad topics, such as each country's cybersecurity strategy and policy, bilateral and multilateral cooperation including UN, and cybersecurity capacity building. In the same year, 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." The French frigates *Bretagne* and *Prairial* made port calls in August and November respectively, while the French Air Force fighter aircraft visited Japan in July 2023 and July 2024. In September, the Japan-France joint exercise "Brunet Takamori 24" was held in Japan for the first time. Monitoring and surveillance operations were also conducted on illicit maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers, by the frigate *Prairial* from the end of October to the end of November, and by patrol aircraft from mid-October to late November. At the Japan-France Summit Meeting in May, the two leaders welcomed the multilayered developments of Japan-France cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and concurred on commencement of negotiations on the Japan-France Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA).

In relation to Germany, 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 SDF of Japan and the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Germany ("Acquisition and Cross-Servicing

Agreement," or ACSA) entered into force in July. German military aircrafts including Eurofighter Typhoons and a German frigate "*Baden-Württemberg*" and replenishment ship visited Japan in July and August respectively and conducted joint exercises with the SDF. The frigate conducted monitoring and surveillance operations on illicit maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers from the end of August to mid-September.

At the Japan-Italy Summit Meeting in February, the leaders welcomed the progress in cooperation such as joint exercises by naval vessels scheduled in 2024. In March, the inaugural Japan-Italy Politico-Military (PM) Dialogue was convened in Rome. Thereafter, in June, the two leaders took the opportunity of the informal talks at the G7 Summit in Apulia to announce the Japan-Italy Action Plan, which serves as a guideline for future Japan-Italy cooperation, as well as the commencement of formal negotiations on the Agreement on the Japan-Italy ACSA. In August, the carrier strike group (comprising of the aircraft carrier *Cavour*, the frigate *Alpino*, and the patrol vessel *Raimondo Montecuccoli*) visited Japan, and the two countries conducted navy-to-navy joint exercises. The training ship, *Amerigo Vespucci*, also visited Port of Tokyo for the first time. The patrol vessel *Raimondo Montecuccoli* conducted Italy's first monitoring and surveillance operations on illicit maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers, from late August to early September. The JMSDF training vessels JS *Kashima* and JS *Shimakaze* made a port call in Naples, and carried out a goodwill exercise with the Italian navy frigate *Carlo Margottini* in the Aegean Sea. Following up from 2023, F-35 fighter aircraft from the Italian Air Force visited Japan in August and participated in a joint exercise. In November, Foreign Minister Iwaya and Minister of Defense Guido Crosetto signed the Japan-Italy ACSA.

Southeast Asia is located in a geopolitically strategic position and faces Japan's important sea lanes. A stable and prosperous Southeast Asia is crucial to the stability and prosperity not only for the East Asia region but also for the international community. On June 3, 2023, Japan signed the Agreement concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology with Singapore, which entered into force on the same day. In October 2023 and March 2024, Japan delivered the

first and second air surveillance radar systems to the Philippines as the first transfers of finished equipment. Japan and the Philippines concurred to commence negotiations on the Japan-Philippines Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) in November 2023, and signed the same Agreement in July. To ensure the rule of law at sea, 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 2023.

With regards to Canada, a “strategic partner” of Japan, at the Japan-Canada Summit Meetings and Foreign Ministers’ Meetings, the two countries welcomed the steady implementation of the “Japan-Canada Action Plan for contributing to a free and open Indo-Pacific region (FOIP)” announced in 2022, as well as the consistent progress in bilateral cooperation. Negotiations on the Japan-Canada Agreement concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology also commenced in October. The Government of Canada revised its national defense policy in April, announcing its plan to inject 8.1 billion Canadian dollars of additional spending over the next five years (defense spending set at 1.76% of GDP in FY2029), followed by a fresh announcement by the Department of National Defence in July on a defense spending target of 2% of GDP by 2032. Canada has also set out measures in its defense policy to secure a more permanent presence in the Indo-Pacific, and is increasingly deepening its engagement with the region, as signaled by its dispatch of three naval vessels to the Indo-Pacific region in 2024 that passed through the Taiwan Strait at the end of July and late October. In September, the Minister of National Defence Bill Blair visited Japan, the first visit by a Canadian National Defence Minister in five years, and participated in the Japan-Canada Defense Ministerial Meeting. With regard to joint exercises with the Canadian Armed Forces, the Japan-Canada joint exercise “KADEX,” which has been conducted every year since 2017, was held from the end of August to early September, and Japan, the U.S., Canada, and the Philippines held cooperative maritime activities in the South China Sea in mid-June. As for responding to illicit maritime activities including ship-to-ship

transfers, a Royal Canadian Navy vessel conducted monitoring and surveillance operations from mid-June to late July, from early to mid-November, and from late November to mid-December, while monitoring and surveillance operations by aircraft were conducted from early May to early June, and between late September and mid-October.

In relation to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Prime Minister Kishida attended the NATO Summit in July for the third consecutive year. He reaffirmed the importance of cooperating with like-minded countries across regional boundaries, based on the recognition that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is becoming increasingly inseparable, and concurred on further strengthening Japan-NATO relations. During the Summit, NATO and the Indo-Pacific partners (IP4: Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the ROK) announced that the following four areas were identified as flagship projects aimed at establishing sustainable cooperation between IP4 and NATO: (a) support to Ukraine; (b) cyber defense; (c) hostile information, including disinformation; and, (d) technology. Furthermore, in October, members of the IP4 including Japan were invited to the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Defence for the first time. Defense Minister Nakatani attended the meeting and held a meeting with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, who took office on October 1.

The 1st Japan-EU Foreign Ministerial Strategic Dialogue was convened in November, during which the Japan-EU Security and Defence Partnership was released, making Japan the first country in the Indo-Pacific region to announce a partnership with the EU. In this dialogue, the Ministers concurred on strengthening concrete cooperation and dialogues in areas such as cyber, space, response to hybrid threats, and maritime security, given the current severe security environment. The 6th Japan-EU Cyber Dialogue was held in the same month, and the two sides exchanged views on various topics, such as cybersecurity strategies and policies of Japan and the EU, challenges in the cyber domain, bilateral and multilateral cooperation including in the UN, and capacity building assistance.

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 are 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 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 to (a) 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) 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 2023, followed by the second Consultation in July 2024. They

discussed their respective cybersecurity policies as well as threat awareness in cyberspace. In May 2023, Japan signed the Agreement concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the first such agreement concluded between Japan and a country of the Middle East. This Agreement entered into force in January.

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 a framework in which various entities participate, including North Korea and the EU, with the aim of improving the security environment of the Asia-Pacific region by promoting confidence-building and preventive diplomacy through dialogues and cooperation. In July, the 31st ARF Ministerial Meeting was held, and the participants candidly exchanged views mainly on regional and international affairs, including issues concerning Ukraine, Taiwan, the East China Sea and the South China Sea, North Korea, Myanmar, and the Middle East. 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. 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 addition, in May 2022, Japan enacted the Economic Security Promotion Act 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. The operation of various systems related to these four pillars has commenced.

In the face of various threats at hand through economic means, the National Security Strategy, established 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.

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 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.

In May, the Act on the Protection and Utilization of Critical Economic Security Information, which covers the introduction of a security clearance system in the field of economic security, was enacted. It is scheduled to be enforced within one year from its promulgation.

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. With the aim of strengthening data security and protection for American citizens, the President issued an Executive Order in February 2024 that grants the Attorney General the right to issue regulations to prohibit the large-scale transfer of American's sensitive personal data to countries of concern. A National Security Memorandum (NSM) to manage AI security risks was announced in October, based on the Executive Order for the Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) issued in October 2023. At the end of the same month, the Department of the Treasury issued a final rule on the Outbound Order (provisions pertaining to U.S. foreign investments) regarding countries or regions of concern (China, Hong Kong, and Macau) in relation to the three areas of semiconductors, quantum information technologies, and AI in view of the severe impact it may have on national security. In December, the Department of Commerce tightened export control measures of semiconductor-related items to China with the aim of restricting China's capability to produce advanced semiconductors that can be diverted for military applications. In the same month, the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) announced tariff increases on imports of five products originating from China, including tungsten, polysilicon, and wafers, based on Section 301 of the Trade Act.

In January, the European Commission published a policy document entitled "Advancing European economic security: an introduction to five new initiatives," and announced a comprehensive policy package comprising proposals on the screening of foreign direct investments into the EU, export control, outbound

investment, support for research and development involving technologies with dual-use potential, and research security, based on the European Economic Security Strategy issued in June 2023. The Critical Raw Materials Act, which establishes targets related to supply capacities for strategic raw materials and sets out provisions on support for strategic projects and supply chain risk monitoring, entered into force in May, with the aim of securing the supply of critical raw materials for the EU. The need to address economic security issues, including critical raw materials and supply chain resilience, was also stressed in the report on the single market presented by former Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta in April, and the report on the future of European competitiveness presented by former Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi in September. The “Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2024 – 2029,” published in July by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, positions the advancement of Europe’s economic security as a priority, and a Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security was newly appointed in the European Commission inaugurated in December.

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, and the tightening of investment screening systems for land and businesses related to sensitive national security (January 2021). In November, it amended the Security of Critical Infrastructure Act 2018 to further enhance security. This includes measures such as promoting information sharing between public and private entities by clearly stipulating the protection of trade secrets provided by businesses and other parties to the government, and introducing powers that allow regulators to issue remedial orders pertaining to the mandatory development of risk management programs by critical infrastructure owners and operators.

Canada published its Critical Minerals Strategy in 2022 and strengthened its efforts ranging from critical mineral research and exploration to recycling. In

January 2024, it made a statement on 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. In August, the Government of Canada announced additional tariffs of 100% on electric vehicles (EVs) produced in China as well as 25% on steel and aluminum products imported from China, with the aim of protecting Canadian workers and major economic sectors from China’s unfair trade practices. These additional tariffs went into effect from October.

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 bilateral efforts including through the Japan-U.S. Economic Policy Consultative Committee Meeting (the Economic “2+2”) and economic security consultations, as well as cooperation under the G7, Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad), and Japan-U.S.-ROK, to expand and deepen cooperation with a view to developing common recognition and coordinating policies.

With regard to responses based on existing rules, Japan has been working in coordination with like-minded countries to seek correction of unfair trade policies and practices by other countries, from the perspective of consistency with existing rules such as World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements. 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, 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 2024.

Under the G7 framework, based on the G7 Leaders' Statement on Economic Resilience and Economic Security issued at the G7 Hiroshima Summit held in May 2023, the G7 leaders affirmed at the G7 Apulia Summit held in June that they will continue to cooperate and act together on addressing issues related to overcapacity and non-market policies and practices (NMPP), countering economic coercion, enhancing supply chain resilience, and protecting critical and emerging technologies. In particular, they affirmed a shared recognition that the market distortions and overcapacity resulting from NMPP not only undermine the free and fair rules-based international economic order, but also exacerbate strategic dependencies and vulnerabilities and hinder emerging and developing countries' sustainable development. At the same time, they concurred on pursuing joint monitoring to assess how NMPP are producing harmful overcapacities and other spillover effects. At the G7 Trade Ministers' Meeting held in July, the Ministers concurred to strengthen collaboration among like-minded countries and between the public and private sectors for enhancing supply chain resilience, and to bolster efforts to address overcapacity and NMPP. At the same meeting, the Ministers also confirmed that they will work to strengthen monitoring and information exchange on export controls of critical minerals.

Moreover, they condemned any attempts to weaponize economic dependencies, and concurred to increase collective assessment, preparedness, deterrence, and response to economic coercion.

Furthermore, a session on economic resilience was convened at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Ministerial Council Meeting chaired by Japan in May. During the session, participating countries discussed cooperation among member countries and the role that OECD could play, in efforts related to economic resilience and economic security, such as strengthening supply chain resilience, countering economic coercion, and addressing NMPP.

At the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Leaders' Meeting held in September, the leaders concurred on expanding cooperation in the area of 5G and Open RAN to the Philippines and Tuvalu, following the 2023 announcement of the launch and rollout of Open RAN⁽⁴⁾ in Palau. They also affirmed their continued commitment to advancing cooperation on semiconductors.

At the Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting held in November, the leaders commended the Trilateral Economic Security Dialogue for deepening trilateral engagements on economic security issues, and welcomed regularized, active consultation among the three countries to exchange early warning information on supply chain disruptions. They also concurred on the need for trilateral collaboration on technology security, standards, and trusted ecosystems.

With regard to Japan's relations with the U.S., at the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting in April, the two leaders concurred on strengthening cooperation to respond to economic coercion, non-market policies and practices and overcapacities, and enhance supply chain resilience. In this context, they shared the view to further deepen coordination toward ensuring economic security either bilaterally, through the G7, or based on other various frameworks.

In regard to relations with European countries, the first Japan-France Economic Security Working Group was held in February, based on the "Roadmap on Japan-France Cooperation under the 'Exceptional Partnership'"

(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.

announced between the leaders of Japan and France in December 2023. At the Japan-UK Summit Meeting held in November, the two leaders concurred on the launch of the Japan-UK Economic 2+2 Ministers' Meeting ("Economic 2+2") to further advance bilateral cooperation in the field of economy, including trade and economic security, between Japan and the UK. In regard to Germany, the first meeting of the Japan-Germany Economic Security Consultations was held in November based on the outcomes of the Japan-Germany Summit Meeting that took place in July.

With regard to Japan's relations with the EU, the two sides exchanged views on their respective initiatives regarding economic security at the Japan-EU High-Level Economic Dialogue held in May. In addition to affirming the importance of cooperation between like-minded countries, they confirmed the launch of the "Transparent, Resilient and Sustainable Supply Chains Initiative" and concurred on working together to address strategic dependencies and systemic vulnerabilities and ensure resilient and reliable global supply chains.

With regard to Japan's relations with the ROK, at the 16th Japan-ROK High-Level Economic Consultations held in December, the two sides confirmed the progress of collaboration and cooperation in a wide range of areas, including economic security.

With regard to Japan's relations with Australia, at the Eleventh Japan-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations ("2+2") held in September, the Ministers concurred on strengthening cooperation in the field of economic security, including through leveraging the Australia-Japan Economic Security Dialogue. Furthermore, at the Japan-Australia Summit Meeting in October, the leaders concurred on strengthening dialogue and cooperation in the field of economic security.

As for India, at the Third Japan-India 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting held in August, the two sides confirmed that they would enhance cooperation in the field of economic security. Following that, the inaugural round of the Japan-India Dialogue on Economic Security, including Strategic Trade and Technology, was held in November.

In relation to Canada, in addition to the 2022 announcement of the "Japan-Canada Action Plan for

contributing to a free and open Indo-Pacific region" that includes cooperation in the field of energy security, the two countries signed Memorandums of Cooperation Concerning Battery Supply Chains and Industrial Science and Technology respectively in September 2023, further accelerating cooperation in these fields.

With regard to Japan's relations with Southeast Asia, the "Joint Vision Statement from the Leaders of Japan, the Philippines, and the United States" issued on the occasion of the Japan-U.S.-Philippines Summit in April set out the leaders' strong opposition to economic coercion, and stressed the importance of a rules-based economic order while underscoring the need for close coordination in dealing with economic coercion. The "Mekong-Japan Cooperation Strategy 2024" adopted at the 15th Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July confirmed that Japan and the Mekong countries will work on strengthening economic security and economic resilience, expressed their concerns over as well as opposition to economic coercion, and stressed the importance of the rules-based economic order.

E Response to Economic Coercion

Among the new issues described in section C on page 206, 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.

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 recognition broadly within the international community in cooperation with the relevant countries including the Global South, while also working with allies and like-minded countries to raise international awareness on how economic coercion challenges the free, open, and rules-based international order. Based

on such understanding, steady efforts have been made on the Coordination Platform on Economic Coercion, whose launch was confirmed by the leaders at the G7 Hiroshima Summit. At the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting held in May, an abstract was released for the OECD trade policy paper titled “Trade Impacts of Economic Coercion,” prepared with voluntary contributions from Japan. This paper analyzed past cases of economic coercion to shed light on their characteristics and economic impacts. The Japan-Philippines-U.S. Trilateral Discussion on Economic Resilience was held in October, during which participants shared their concern over and strong opposition to economic coercion, and a commitment to building economic resilience. They also affirmed that the three countries intend to cooperate to enhance their resilience and ability to respond to potential economic coercion.

(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: deterring cyberattacks, rule-making in cyberspace, supporting developing countries, and leveraging various cyber consultations and dialogues for information exchange and policy coordination related to these efforts.

As an initiative to deter cyberattacks, Japan has carried out “public attribution,” which is to publicly condemn or express concerns about groups conducting cyberattacks. MOFA has issued statements by its

Press Secretary to condemn North Korea’s involvement behind the WannaCry incident⁽⁵⁾ in 2017, the cyberattacks by APT10 based in China in 2018, and the cyberattacks carried out by APT40 in 2021. Also, in January 2025, Japan issued the Japan-U.S.-ROK Joint Statement on Cryptocurrency Thefts by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and Public-Private Collaboration, working with ally and like-minded countries to send out such messages.

Regarding initiatives on rule-making in cyberspace, through discussions at 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 adopted the UN norms of responsible state behavior in cyberspace,⁽⁶⁾ which sets out 11 items. While these norms are not legally binding under international law, they have been adopted by consensus among the UN Member States and provide the basis for rule-making in cyberspace. Therefore, it is important for each country to implement these norms concretely, and to build up state 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 also important for each country to clarify their basic positions on how existing international law applies to cyberspace. Japan made its position public in 2021,⁽⁷⁾ and has been emphasizing the importance of clarifying basic positions through various venues.

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, relevant ministries and agencies, including MOFA are engaged in initiatives, including those through international organizations, with a focus on ASEAN, which is a cornerstone for realizing a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” based on the rule of law. Specifically, Japan conducts training at the ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Capacity Building

(5) A malicious program that North Korea is believed to have been involved in. In May 2017, more than 300,000 computers in over 150 countries were infected, and ransom was demanded.

(6) 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.

(7) See MOFA’s website for Japan’s position:
https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/page3e_001114.html

(7)



Centre (AJCCBC) and provides training programs and equipment by the relevant ministries and agencies, implements the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Country/Knowledge Co-Creation Program (KCCP), contributes to the Cybersecurity Multi-Donor Trust Fund through the World Bank, and co-organizes the “JP-US-EU Industrial Control Systems Cybersecurity Week for the Indo-Pacific Region” jointly with the U.S. and European governments through the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and the Industrial Cyber Security Center of Excellence (ICSCoE) under the Information-technology Promotion Agency, Japan (IPA), among other initiatives.

Leveraging various cyber consultations and dialogues is of utmost importance in advancing these initiatives in cyberspace. To that end, Japan is promoting international cooperation through cyber consultations and dialogues with many countries and regions. In 2024, Japan held intergovernmental consultations with the U.S., Jordan, Lithuania, and the UK, as well as trilateral consultations between Japan-U.S.-ROK, Japan-U.S.-Philippines, and with the EU. Under the Quad Cybersecurity Partnership announced at the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Leaders' Meeting in May 2022, 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 within the International Counter Ransomware Initiative, a multilateral framework led by the U.S. to combat the rapidly growing threat of ransomware,⁽⁸⁾ as well as the Pall Mall Process, which is a framework led by the UK and France to tackle the proliferation and irresponsible use of commercial cyber intrusion capabilities.

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 is blessed with a vast exclusive economic zone (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 2023 and the Ocean Development Strategy formulated this April. In cooperation with allied and like-minded countries, Japan is advancing efforts to realize a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP),” and working in particular 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 tensions 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 Section 1, 6(2) on page 253.) At the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) in March 2023, Prime Minister Kishida reaffirmed the importance of the “Three Principles of the Rule of Law at Sea” while introducing 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 its 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

⁽⁸⁾ Cyberattacks carried out for ransom purposes.

discussions among concerned international organizations at conferences that include the Meeting 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 Section 1, 6(2) on page 253.) At the G7 Apulia Summit held in June, G7 leaders re-emphasized the universal and unified character of 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 2024, and the number of days China Coast Guard vessels navigated in the contiguous zone around the Senkaku Islands reached a record high of 355 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 more than 80 hours in April 2023. The Chinese military is also becoming increasingly active and expanding their operations, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in the air and waters in the East China Sea, 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 spotted a buoy believed to have been installed by China in Japan's EEZ in the East China Sea. The Government of Japan has taken various opportunities at all levels, including at the leader and foreign ministerial levels, to protest against China and has strongly and repeatedly urged China to remove the buoy immediately. In February 2025, it was confirmed that the buoy in question was not within Japan's EEZ. Regarding a buoy newly identified within Japan's EEZ south of Yonaguni Island in December 2024, the Government of Japan is calling on China for its immediate removal, on

such occasions as the Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in the same month.

Given China's continued and strengthened 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 with a determination to resolutely defend Japan's territory as well as territorial sea and airspace. 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.

At the G7 Apulia Summit convened in June, 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 October, Prime Minister Ishiba expressed strong opposition to the continuing and intensifying activities in the East China Sea that infringe upon Japan's sovereignty.

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 or coercion, which run counter to the rule of law and openness, as well as actions that increase regional tensions, based on expansive maritime claims without legal basis. These include further militarization of disputed features, and coercive and intimidating actions against coastal states and others by using its armed forces, coast guards and maritime militia. Especially since 2023, ramming between Chinese and Philippine vessels as well as use of water cannons by Chinese vessels against Philippine vessels have frequently occurred. In June, Chinese crews boarded a Philippine vessel in the vicinity of Second Thomas Shoal, seized weapons and supplies, destroyed equipment, and forcibly towed a Philippine vessel. A Philippine soldier lost a thumb due to the ramming.

From the perspective of supporting the full enforcement of the rule of law at sea, and upholding freedom of navigation and overflight and the safety of sea lanes,

■ Uotsuri Island (Ishigaki City, Okinawa Prefecture)



Photo: Office of Policy Planning and Coordination on Territory and Sovereignty, Cabinet Secretariat

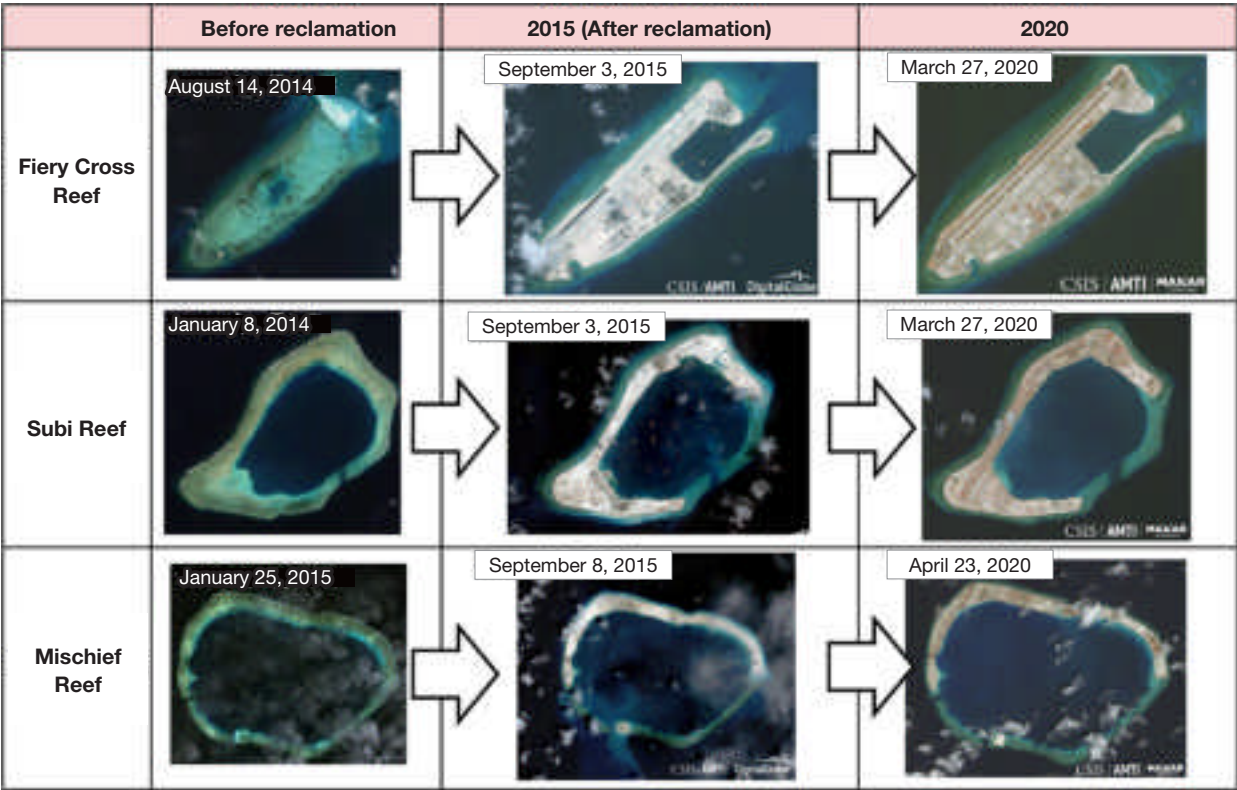
Japan has consistently expressed its strong opposition to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion, as well as any actions that increase tensions in the South China Sea. Japan has also emphasized the importance of all the concerned parties related to the South China Sea to work toward peaceful settlement of disputes based on international law, in particular UNCLOS. In July, which marked eight years since the issuance of the Arbitral Tribunal's award as to the disputes between the Philippines and China regarding the South China Sea in 2016, MOFA released a statement by the Foreign Minister, reiterating that the 2016 Tribunal's award is final and legally binding on the parties to the dispute, the Philippines and China, and that Japan strongly hopes that the parties' compliance with the award will lead to the peaceful settlement of disputes in the South China Sea.

At the Japan-U.S.-Philippines Summit, held for the first time in April, the three leaders reiterated serious concern over China's repeated obstruction of Philippine vessels' exercise of high seas freedom of navigation and the disruption of supply lines to Second Thomas Shoal, which constitute dangerous and destabilizing conduct. At the G7 Apulia Summit convened in June, the G7 leaders expressed serious concern about the situation in the South China Sea, and reiterated their strong

opposition to any unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force or coercion. They also expressed serious concern about the increasing use of dangerous maneuvers and water cannons against Philippine vessels. In this regard, they reaffirmed UNCLOS's important role in setting out the legal framework that governs all activities in the oceans and the seas. At the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Leaders' Meeting held in September, the leaders expressed their serious concern about the militarization of disputed features and coercive and intimidating maneuvers in the South China Sea, and condemned the dangerous use of coast guard and maritime militia vessels, including increasing use of dangerous maneuvers. Furthermore, they underscored their opposition to efforts to disrupt other countries' offshore resource exploitation activities, and re-emphasized the importance of maintaining and upholding unimpeded commerce consistent with international law. At the ASEAN Japan Summit and EAS held in October, Prime Minister Ishiba stressed that, as the militarization and coercive activities in the South China Sea are continuing and intensifying, any unjust claims of maritime interests and activities that do not align with UNCLOS are unacceptable.

Issues regarding the South China Sea are directly related to the peace and stability of the region and

Large-scale, rapid outpost building in the South China Sea by China



Source: CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative/Digital Globe/MAXAR

constitute a legitimate concern of the international community. These issues are also important matters of concern for Japan, which depends on marine transport for much of its resources and energy. Japan will continue to work with the international community, such as ASEAN member states, and the U.S. to uphold and strengthen a free and open maritime order based on the rule of law.

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.

(A) Measures to Address Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia

In 2006, the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) entered into force under Japan's leadership, and through 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 (expiration of term 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 58 in 2022, 67 in 2023, and 70 in 2024, the occurrence of serious incidents, including kidnappings and assaults, has been suppressed in recent years as a result of activities by ReCAAP-ISC and the contributions of the contracting parties.

(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 declined to a low level with zero or one attempted incident since 2019. This low level has been maintained despite the occurrence of eight piracy cases in 2024. Going forward, there is a need for cooperation with the international community to ensure that the number of piracy cases does not reverse into an increasing trend again.

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, which have helped to stabilize the situation in these waters. Japan has also been making multilayered efforts such as support for enhancing the maritime law enforcement capabilities of Somalia, Djibouti, and the neighboring countries, and ensuring the stability of Somali society.

(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 was 19 in 2022, 22 in 2023, and 18 in 2024, and the Gulf of Guinea continues to be a sea area with the largest number of serious incidents in the world, including cases with 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 countries through training programs conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and JICA, and works with the international community through participation in meetings of the “G7++ Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea,” 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 allied 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 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 Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (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 20 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 on measures against maritime crimes in the target countries of the Indo-Pacific and West Africa.

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 in areas, such as vessel maintenance and underwater medicine, to the militaries of countries in the Indo-Pacific region, and conducts training on board Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) vessels for young naval officers of ASEAN member states and other countries.

Official Security Assistance (OSA), newly established in 2023, positions maritime security as one of its priority areas with a view to strengthening security and deterrence capabilities by providing equipment and supplies as well as assistance for infrastructure development to the armed forces and related organizations of like-minded countries. In FY2024, Japan decided to provide the Philippines with Rigid-hulled inflatable boats and coastal radar systems, Indonesia with patrol boats, and Djibouti with coastal radar systems and related infrastructure.

Japan also provides support toward strengthening maritime law enforcement capabilities through international organizations and multilateral frameworks. In October, coast guards and other law-enforcement agencies from 12 ReCAAP contracting parties, primarily Asian countries, were invited to Tokyo to participate in a capacity building project. (See the Special Feature on page 216.) Japan is also coordinating with allied and like-minded countries, such as by cooperating on the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA), an initiative implemented by Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad), and sharing MDA information with various countries based on memorandums of understanding.

(5) Outer Space

In June 2023, 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 together with Japan's allied and like-minded countries.

In recent years, outer space has become more congested due to diversification of use and an increase in the 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 respond to 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.

A Realization of the Rule of Law in Outer Space

Based on the belief that outer space must remain a domain free of nuclear weapons, Japan and the U.S. jointly drafted a United Nations Security Council resolution in April that calls on the member states not to develop nuclear weapons and any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction specifically designed to be placed in outer space. This draft resolution was co-submitted by 65 member states but was rejected, as Russia exercised its veto. Subsequently, Japan, the U.S., and Argentina jointly submitted a draft resolution that included similar elements to the United Nations General Assembly. The draft resolution was adopted with an overwhelming majority of 167 member states.

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 from January through

SPECIAL
FEATURE

Modern Counter-Piracy Measures and Japan's Contribution

What comes to your mind when you hear the word “pirate”? They may be the villains in fairy tales or the protagonists in movies and cartoons, but, even today, pirates actually exist and still pose threats to global peace and security.

As a maritime nation, Japan has long been connected to the world and has developed through trade and the movement of people by sea. Today, with the development of maritime transportation routes and dramatic improvements in transportation capabilities and technology, many of the various products and resources imported to Japan, such as oil, are transported by ships. Some of these shipping routes, including the Panama Canal, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Suez Canal, are waters that serve as vital hubs for global maritime transportation and are known as “chokepoints.” Many modern piracy incidents¹ occur around these chokepoints.

The international community has been working together to address this old yet new threat. In the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia, where piracy incidents frequently occur, about 60 countries are cooperating to combat piracy. Japan has dispatched Self-Defense Force destroyers and patrol aircrafts which are conducting warning and surveillance operations even at this very moment. Piracy incidents are also occurring in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, which are the main arteries of the global economy. In light of this, Japan is cooperating with the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) Information Sharing Centre (ISC) to address piracy in these regions.

The safety of the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, through which most ships from Europe, the Middle East, and Africa pass to reach Japan and other ports in Asia, directly affects our lives. Given this, in 2001, Prime Minister Koizumi proposed the establishment of a legal framework to promote regional cooperation in order to effectively address the problem of piracy in Asia. This came to fruition in 2006 with the entry into force of ReCAAP. This Japan-led agreement came to include not only Asian countries, but also the U.S., Australia, and European countries. Among ReCAAP-ISC's activities, Japan places particular priority on supporting capacity building for the coast guard agencies of Asian countries. The coast guard agencies of coastal countries shoulder the safety and security of Asian waters, including the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. Strengthening their maritime law enforcement capabilities through ReCAAP will lead to peace and security in the region, including Japan.



Group photo of CBEP participants (October, Tokyo)

introduced Japan's efforts in maritime security to deepen participants' understanding. With the participants taking the outcomes of this seminar back to their home countries and sharing them within their respective agencies, this initiative will contribute to improving maritime law enforcement capabilities across the region and lead to the safety of the seas in Asia, including Japan, as well as the realization of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP).”

In this way, protecting our way of life through ensuring maritime safety and security is one of the most important efforts in Japan's foreign policy. And, as with other global issues, addressing piracy is not something that Japan can achieve on its own. The Government of Japan will continue to work as one to promote international cooperation for maritime security.



Major maritime transportation routes to Japan and their chokepoints

As a notable example, in October 2024, the ReCAAP Secretariat, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA), and the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) jointly held the ReCAAP Capacity Building Executive Programme (CBEP) in Tokyo. This week-long seminar was attended by senior officers of maritime law enforcement agencies from 13 countries that are ReCAAP Contracting Parties, primarily Asian countries. They shared information on the counter-piracy efforts of their respective countries and discussed ways to address challenges. Japan emphasized that building a maritime order based on the rule of law is important in combating piracy and

¹ “Piracy incidents” include piracy that occurs on the high seas and armed robbery that occurs in territorial waters of coastal states.

February, active discussions were held on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, in addition to discussions on individual themes, such as space debris and remote sensing.

At the session of the Legal Subcommittee convened in April, discussions were held on the definition of outer space and on issues related to 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, intensive discussions were held at the working group established under the Legal Subcommittee in 2021 on how international rules regarding space resources should be.

Regarding the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS), active discussions were held in the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on “Responsible Behaviours in Outer Space” from 2022 through 2023, which was jointly proposed by Japan, the UK, and other countries in 2021. However, the OEWG was unable to adopt the report due to objection from some countries. Separately, the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on PAROS, established through a proposal by Russia in 2022, was convened in Geneva in November 2023 and August 2024, and a report was adopted by consensus. The United Nations General Assembly also decided to merge the succeeding OEWG on “Responsible Behaviours” proposed by the UK and the OEWG on PAROS proposed by Russia in 2023 respectively.

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. Japan provided legal capacity building support with a focus on continuing supervision as well as authorization and licensing of space activities, and conducted an intensive three-day workshop at the United Nations University in January with about 25 experts from seven countries (Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, and Thailand).

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, the Ninth Meeting of the Japan-U.S. Comprehensive Dialogue on Space was held in the U.S. in August. It was attended by officials from space-related ministries and agencies of Japan and the U.S., who engaged in comprehensive discussions on a wide range of subjects including commercial space, space security, and civil space. A joint statement was issued on the outcomes of the Dialogue.

As part of the efforts under Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad), workshops were conducted through the Quad Space Working Group established at the Quad Leaders’ Meeting held in 2021. At the Quad Leaders’ Meeting held in September, the four leaders concurred on calling upon all States to contribute to the safe, peaceful, responsible, and sustainable use of outer space.

With regard to multilateral meetings, the 30th session of the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF-30) was held in November, co-organized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), and the Australian Space Agency (ASA). At this Forum, discussions were held regarding a collaborative system for building a sustainable and responsible regional space sector.

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 52 countries as of the end of December 2024.

Furthermore, in 2023, 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. The Implementing Arrangement prepared for this Framework Agreement and signed in April states that Japan will provide and maintain the operation of the Pressurized Rover on the lunar surface, while the U.S. will provide two astronaut flight opportunities on the lunar surface to Japanese astronauts in future Artemis missions. In connection with this, at the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting convened in the same month, the two leaders announced a shared goal for a Japanese national to be the first non-American astronaut to land on the Moon on a future Artemis mission.

Japan has been providing human resource development programs (robot programming, physics and plant experiments, etc.) to the Asia Pacific region through the Kibo-ABC Initiative established under the APRSAF, utilizing the Japanese Experiment Module “Kibo” on the ISS to support capacity building in the space field. Japan also provides emerging space-faring nations with the opportunity to deploy nano-satellites through the KiboCUBE program,⁽⁹⁾ a collaborative framework implemented with the UNOOSA. Under this program, the Central American Integration System (SICA), Mexico, as well as Tanzania and Côte d’Ivoire (both countries jointly) 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 Sustainable Development Goals (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 range of uses, including rainfall situation monitoring, disaster management, and agriculture in 152 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 490 emergency requests from 37 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 JICA, in collaboration with JAXA, hosted 13 officials from space-related agencies of 10 countries in Japan in July for training to enhance their ability to utilize space technology to contribute to the SDGs. Additionally, in the technical cooperation projects launched in FY2023 to improve the organizational and technological capacity of the space agencies of Paraguay and Rwanda, several training courses were conducted in Japan with the support of industry, academia, and government partners in Japan’s space sector. On the occasion of Prime Minister Kishida’s visit to Paraguay in May, JAXA and the Paraguayan Space Agency (AEP) signed a memorandum of cooperation on space development and established the “Japan-Paraguay Space Cooperation Program” through industry-academia-government collaboration, affirming that both sides will advance multifaceted cooperation.

(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

⁽⁹⁾ A program that provides selected organizations with the opportunity to deploy nano-satellites from the ISS/Japanese Experiment Module – Kibo, with the aim of contributing to improving space-related technologies in emerging space-faring nations.

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, peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives are becoming increasingly important. For example, the strengthening of Peace operations, such as peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts has been incorporated into the “New Agenda for Peace” and the outcome document of the Summit of the Future entitled “Pact for the Future.” (See Section 5 (2) on page 243.)

A On-the-Ground Initiatives

(A) UN Peacekeeping Operations (UN PKO)

As of December 31, 2024, 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. About 70,000 military, police, and civilian personnel have been deployed to these missions. Against the backdrop of an increasingly complex environment surrounding UN PKO, including growing threats associated with the use of new technologies, active discussions are being held on the future of Peacekeeping.

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 12,700 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. Two additional SDF personnel, including an officer to fill a Deputy Chief of Staff position, were dispatched to the UNMISS Headquarters in May 2024, making a total of six SDF personnel on active duty there as of December 31, 2024. They 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, 2024. 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)”⁽¹⁰⁾ approach in its Development Cooperation Charter revised in June 2023. At the Second Global Refugee Forum (GRF) held in December 2023, Japan expressed its 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.

⁽¹⁰⁾ 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.

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 Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) Ministerial Meeting convened in August, Japan engaged in discussions toward peace and stability. Specifically, Japan announced the launch of the “Women's Peace Human Resource Development Initiative in the Horn of Africa” based at the Intergovernmental Development Organization (IGAD) and the development of a Mine Action Platform for counter-mine and unexploded ordnance measures, and highlighted the importance of reforming the UN Security Council to better reflect African voices. TICAD 9 is scheduled to be held in Yokohama in August 2025, and Japan will continue to support African-led efforts toward peace and stability through consolidating democracy and promoting the rule of law, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and community empowerment.

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 the “Horn of Africa” region, the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa works to secure humanitarian access and promote ceasefire. Japan also contributes to the peace and stability of this region by providing support in elections, support for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants in Ethiopia, and humanitarian assistance, among other efforts. Furthermore, Japan, in collaboration with the UNDP, has disbursed a total of 66 million U.S. dollars between 2008 and 2024 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) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS). 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 PBC's Organizational Committee since its establishment. It has been advocating the importance of investments in institution building and people, recognizing the need to adopt the HDP Nexus approach, in order to realize resilient and sustainable peace. In 2024, Japan served as the informal coordinator between the PBC and the Security Council, thereby contributing to strengthening cooperation between the two bodies.

Japan has contributed a total of 66.85 million U.S. dollars to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)⁽¹¹⁾ as of December 31, 2024, and as a major donor country,

⁽¹¹⁾ A fund established in October 2006 to provide support to various 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.

also actively supports the execution of projects implemented by UN agencies in Africa and other regions.

Japan continued to address peacebuilding as one of its priorities during its two-year term on the UN Security Council starting in January 2023. It hosted Open Debates on peacebuilding and conflict prevention on two occasions in January 2023 and March 2024 during its Presidency of the UN Security Council. These debates focused on various challenges faced by the so-called “Global South,” emphasized the role of people in preventing the recurrence of conflict and in sustaining peace, and underscored the importance of strengthening the UN through the utilization of the PBC. Many countries supported such views.

Furthermore, Japan engaged in efforts in the area of peacebuilding in cooperation with other members of the UN Security Council. In January 2024, Japan, Guyana, and Mozambique co-hosted a Security Council meeting 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 stimulated discussions not only as a PBC member state, but also in UN fora as a member of the UN Security Council. Even after the conclusion of its term in the UN Security Council, Japan will continue to contribute actively through the PBC and in other ways.

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 2024, more than 1,000 people have been trained. The participants 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 228 Japanese participants who have completed the training course (Primary Course) for entry-level human resources, 123 work in international organizations (as regular staff, as well as Junior Professional Officers (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 2024, the Primary Course and a training course for mid-career professionals with experience in the fields of peacebuilding and development (Mid-Career Course) were conducted. (See the Column on page 223.)

(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 336 personnel from nine 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 in 2021. A total of 408 SDF personnel and other individuals have contributed to the training programs by serving as instructors for the operation of heavy engineering equipment and in the field of medicine. 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),

and it began training AU mission personnel in 2024. In Cambodia, Japan has also conducted cross-sectoral training in partnership with the ROK and Australia. 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

In recent years, as people grow increasingly reliant on information and communication technology, it has become easier to spread information on extremism ideology online and to disseminate harmful contents that could incite terrorism or other damaging acts. There is a prominent trend of misuse of the Internet and social media by terrorist organizations for financing, recruitment, and propaganda activities. There has also been growing incidence of indiscriminate terrorist attacks that use simple, low-cost devices such as drones on soft targets where large crowds gather and security measures are limited, and some are of the view that terrorism is becoming more lethal. To counter such acts of terrorism, there is a need to cut off the flow of terrorist financing. Alongside international cooperation, it is also important for the public and private sectors to work together.

As a part of Japan's efforts to counter international terrorism and violent extremism, and to take measures against terrorist financing, it contributes to projects through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), and supports capacity building for law enforcement organizations in

Southeast Asian countries. Japan has also participated actively in relevant meetings and discussions held by the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), an international counter-terrorism framework, and cooperates on the project level with the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), an organization affiliated with GCTF, and the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IIJ). In particular, MOFA, together with IIJ and the United Nations Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (UNAFEI),⁽¹²⁾ held the "Rule of Law Workshop in South Asia and Southeast Asia" in Tokyo in February 2024. Through bilateral and trilateral counter-terrorism consultations and the Quad (Japan-Australia-India-U.S.) Counterterrorism 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. As an initiative that Japan has carried out continuously for the past 20 years, Japan also runs an exchange program inviting Islamic school teachers to Japan and providing opportunities to experience interfaith dialogue, intercultural exchanges, and visit educational sites in Japan, with the aim of promoting moderation and the creation of more tolerant societies that are receptive to different values. Going forward, it will continue to implement such initiatives.

B Criminal Justice Initiatives

The UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) 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

⁽¹²⁾ 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.

COLUMN

Peacekeeping in Guinea-Bissau through Japan's Grant Aid

KATSUKI Taiga, Guinea-Bissau office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

I am KATSUKI Taiga, a program associate in the Primary Course of The Program for Global Human Resource Development for Peacebuilding and Development, commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Through this course, I am working as a United Nations Volunteer at the UNDP Guinea-Bissau office.

Have you ever heard of a country called Guinea-Bissau? Located in West Africa, this country is made up of 88 islands of various sizes and boasts beautiful seas and a rich natural environment. However, it is one of the poorest countries in the world and faces various challenges such as poverty, insufficient medical care, lack of social security, political instability, and corruption.

UNDP, whose mission is to put an end to poverty, inequality, and injustice, is engaged in anti-corruption initiatives in Guinea-Bissau through grant aid provided by the Government of Japan. Many people may wonder how anti-corruption contributes to peacekeeping, but I believe it is an important effort toward maintaining peace. For example, embezzlement of public funds or misappropriation of medical supplies causes discontent among citizens and gives rise to political instability such as coups d'état. In fact, as recently as November 2023, there was a shooting incident sparked by a corruption issue, which led to an attempted coup d'état that involved people who were dissatisfied with the president and government.

I work in the UNDP Guinea-Bissau office on anti-corruption activities in the medical sector of this program. Not only is corruption a problem that occurs within the government; its potential risk lurks in many different places. Therefore, in order to prevent corruption, it is necessary to verify the flow of funds and medical supplies as well as their management methods, and to ensure transparency. Specifically, we conduct surveys on the Ministry of Public Health, local governments, hospitals, pharmacies, and other entities and prepare materials analyzing the results of these surveys. We also explore ways to digitize information to enhance transparency.

I also lead capacity building training for state officials in several ministries and agencies, including the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Economy and Finance, in coordination with the Guinea-Bissau government. Based on our training on risk assessment and risk management, we conduct training to identify where the risks of corruption are lurking and how to address such risks. Furthermore, as Prime Minister Rui Duarte de Barros took great interest in our anti-corruption activities, we were requested by the Guinea-Bissau government to provide technical assistance to the evaluation and planning team within the finance department of the Ministry of Public Health. I felt that this was a sign of the significant impact that our activities have. As a part of our technical assistance to the team, we are now working on capacity building training and advisory activities in areas including organizational structure, goal setting, budgeting, and financial strategies to implement strategic vision and internal audits.



Visiting a rural hospital to collect data as part of anti-corruption activities (author on the far right)



In discussions with the government (author on the far left)

UNDP's mission is to fight injustice. To that end, we are cooperating with the Government of Japan to prevent corruption in Guinea-Bissau. I find it very rewarding to be able to tackle anti-corruption head-on through an approach that can only be taken by the UN, while setting the ambitious goal of building a just society and national system. Going forward, I aim to continue enhancing Japan's presence while working on anti-corruption activities through grant aid from the Government of Japan.

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; (a) 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; (b) 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; (c) 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 CCPCJ convened in May 2024, 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. 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, INTERPOL, and the Council of Europe. Japan also contributes to the capacity building of criminal justice officers and other relevant personnel from various countries by conducting training on offender treatment, crime prevention, and anti-crime measures in Japan, through the UNAFEI. 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. With cybercrime emerging as a rising cross-border threat today, the UN launched discussions in 2019 on the United Nations

Convention against Cybercrime; Strengthening International Cooperation for Combating Certain Crimes Committed by Means of Information and Communications Technology Systems and for the Sharing of Evidence in Electronic Form of Serious Crimes, with the goal of bringing the international community together to address cybercrime. This Convention was adopted at the UN Headquarters in New York in December 2024. With the aim of ensuring a free, fair, and secure cyberspace, Japan worked tirelessly to conclude negotiations, including serving as the Vice-Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee established for the purpose of elaborating 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 2023, 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 Anti-Corruption Working Group convened under the G20 framework and has contributed to formulating the Group's action plan from 2025 to 2027, as well as high-level principles in relation to the strengthening of anti-corruption measures in the private sector. In October 2024, Japan attended the ministerial meeting in Natal, Brazil, held for the third time since the establishment of the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group. The G20 countries, including Japan, engaged in discussions on strengthening the international anti-corruption framework, after which the G20 Anti-Corruption

Ministerial Meeting Ministerial Declaration⁽¹³⁾ was 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 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. Since the adoption of the Fourth Round Mutual Evaluation Report in 2021, Japan has been steadily implementing measures based on the Report, and at the FATF Plenary held in October 2024, successfully increased its ratings on all the points for improvements raised in the same Report. In addition, Japan actively 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⁽¹⁴⁾ and designations by the UN Security Council Taliban Sanctions Committee and the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee. As of November 30, 2024, Japan has implemented asset freezing and other measures, based on foreign exchange and international

terrorist asset freezing laws, on 390 individuals and 94 entities related to Taliban, Al-Qaida, and ISIL (Da'esh) as designated by the respective UN Security Council Sanctions Committees, as well as 41 individuals and 31 entities designated in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 1373, making a total of 420 individuals and 122 entities (excluding 11 individuals and 3 entities overlapping in both categories).

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. In 2024 as well, Japan continued to conduct training programs through the 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 various countries, including Japan, and to promote more effective regional cooperation. For example, Japan has been implementing a technical cooperation project with the Government of Thailand via JICA since January 2022, and as a part of that, held a workshop in July 2024 on human trafficking countermeasures to strengthen networks among those involved in such countermeasures in the Mekong region. Since March 2022, 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 2024, 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

⁽¹³⁾ For the full text of the Ministerial Declaration of the 2024 G20 Anti-Corruption Ministerial Meeting, see MOFA's website: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/100748701.pdf>

⁽¹⁴⁾ 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.

⁽¹³⁾



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.

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. Japan is also strengthening practical capabilities for cross-border drug control, providing development support for alternative livelihoods such as the production of alternative crops in place of illicit cultivation of plant materials for drugs to prevent the vulnerable communities (including migrants and youths) in farming villages with unstable political situations and rural areas with poor border controls, particularly in developing countries, from becoming involved in organized crime, as well as advancing efforts to improve the availability of information related to crackdowns on illicit trafficking. At the same time, it is engaged in global efforts to combat illicit drug trafficking, while giving consideration to region-specific development challenges in the area of drug control.

4 Disarmament and Nonproliferation and the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy

(1) Nuclear Disarmament

As the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during war, Japan has a historical mission to lead international efforts to realize a world without nuclear weapons.

At the same time, Japan is facing the most severe and complex security environment since the end of World War II, and in areas surrounding Japan, nuclear arms expansion is advancing in both quantity and quality. Against this backdrop, based on the premise that Japan itself will not possess nuclear weapons, the extended deterrence provided by the U.S., including its nuclear capabilities, is essential in order for Japan to protect the lives and property of its citizens, as well as its own independence and peace.

Moreover, as seen in the situation surrounding the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), there is a divergence of views on how to advance nuclear disarmament, not only between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States but also among non-nuclear-weapon States depending on

whether they are exposed to nuclear threats. Under such circumstances, it is essential 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 is steadily advancing efforts toward nuclear disarmament. While building on the “G7 Leaders’ Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament” issued at the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May 2023 as a solid platform, Japan will continue and strengthen realistic and practical efforts by implementing each of the initiatives under the “Hiroshima Action Plan”⁽¹⁵⁾ 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 meetings of the International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons (IGEP), submitting the Resolution on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons in the UN General

⁽¹⁵⁾ 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: (a) shared recognition on the importance of continuing the record of non-use of nuclear weapons; (b) enhancing transparency; (c) maintaining the decreasing trend of the global nuclear stockpile; (d) securing nuclear non-proliferation and promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy; and, (e) encouraging visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki by international leaders and others.

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 intends to continue maintaining and strengthening the NPT regime, which is the only universal framework toward realizing a world without nuclear weapons. It aims to achieve this through cumulative efforts including through building up realistic and practical efforts by also involving nuclear-weapon States, such as through encouraging states to promote the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and to immediately commence negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT). As a part of such efforts, the launch of the “FMCT Friends” in 2024, promoting disarmament and non-proliferation education, and further, discussions towards 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. On the other hand, it imposes a comprehensive ban on the possession and use of nuclear weapons, and under the current circumstances, it is highly unlikely that any nuclear-weapon States will sign the treaty given its incompatibility with nuclear deterrence. It is difficult to pursue nuclear disarmament without the engagement of nuclear-weapon States, and Japan believes that it remains preferable for global nuclear disarmament efforts to be promoted under the NPT. In light of the increasingly challenging road toward realizing a world without nuclear weapons, Japan, as the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during war, considers it even more pertinent to continue making every effort to advance realistic and practical measures with the participation of both nuclear-weapon States and state parties to the TPNW, based on the NPT regime, while maintaining and strengthening deterrence as well as responding appropriately to security threats as the fundamental premise.

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 second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 11th NPT Review Conference in 2026 was convened from July 22 to August 2 at the UN Office in Geneva. Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs KOMURA Masahiro represented Japan at this meeting, during which he delivered a statement at the General Debate. He stated that the international community is now at a turning point in history and the security environment is rapidly becoming more severe, which is why Japan, as the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during war, is leading the international community's efforts toward a world without nuclear weapons, under the “Hiroshima Action Plan” and with the NPT as the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. He added that Japan will cooperate with the international community to advance efforts on nuclear non-proliferation, including issues regarding North Korea and Iran, and emphasized that Japan is actively engaged in promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The Chair's Summary for this session of the Preparatory Committee was submitted as a working paper, and it reflected a wide range of elements emphasized by Japan in the Hiroshima Action Plan, including enhancing the transparency regarding States' nuclear arsenal and the immediate commencement of negotiations on an FMCT. Japan appreciates the issuance of the Chair's Summary under the current severe security environment, and considers it meaningful that the State Parties demonstrated a common recognition of the importance of maintaining and strengthening the NPT regime toward the next NPT Review Conference in 2026, and that candid exchanges were held in person.

B International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons (IGEP)

The International Group of Eminent Persons (IGEP) was established in 2022 to provide a forum 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 engaged in candid discussions concerning a concrete path toward the realization of a world without nuclear weapons. Following the first meeting (December 2022, Hiroshima), the second meeting (April 2023, Tokyo), and the third meeting (December 2023, Nagasaki), the fourth meeting was held in Yokohama on May 21 and 22. In addition to three Japanese members, including Chair SHIRAISHI Takashi (Special Professor of Emeritus of the Prefectural University of Kumamoto), 10 non-Japanese members from both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States also attended the meeting, making 13 members in total participating in person. Two other non-Japanese members also attended the meeting online. Foreign Minister Kamikawa delivered a video message at the start of the meeting, in which she introduced continued efforts by the Government of Japan toward a world without nuclear weapons and stated that Japan will continue to pursue realistic and practical efforts, taking the sage views of the IGEP as guidance. The IGEP members held frank and in-depth discussions through six sessions, focusing on responsibilities, ethics, and norms surrounding nuclear weapons, updates to nuclear arms control and non-proliferation regimes, and the impact of emerging technologies such as AI, with a view to making recommendations to the 2026 NPT Review Conference.

The fifth meeting was held online on November 6 and 7. In addition to three Japanese members



Courtesy call on Prime Minister Kishida by members attending the fourth meeting of the International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons (May 22, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

including Chair Shiraishi, 11 non-Japanese members also attended the meeting, making 14 members in total participating. For this meeting, Prime Minister Ishiba sent a written message stating that in the midst of an international climate with increasing division and conflict, he looks forward to receiving recommendations grounded in the sage views of IGEP, and that he would like to contribute to the future of the international community together. During the meeting, the IGEP members engaged in discussions focusing on issues such as the importance of norms and ethics surrounding nuclear weapons, strengthening the NPT-based Non-Proliferation Regime, and the impact of emerging technologies such as AI on nuclear risks, with a view to preparing recommendations to the 2026 NPT Review Conference.

C Japan Chair for a world without nuclear weapons

In his address at the General Debate of the UN General Assembly in 2023, Prime Minister Kishida announced the establishment of “Japan Chair for a world without nuclear weapons” at overseas research institutes and think tanks with a view to overcoming the dichotomy of “deterrence versus disarmament.” Following the announcement, “Japan Chairs” were established as specialized posts for nuclear disarmament at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (U.S.), Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (Austria), and the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Asia (IISS-Asia) (Singapore).

Based on the recognition that multilayered efforts, not just government efforts, are important in order to steadily advance the trend of “mainstreaming” nuclear disarmament, the Japan Chair initiative is aimed at stimulating discussions on “realistic and practical nuclear disarmament” for which Japan advocates, as well as contributing to overcoming divisions in the international community.

D The Non-proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI)

The NPDI, a group of 12 non-nuclear-weapon States⁽¹⁶⁾ from various regions established under the leadership

⁽¹⁶⁾ Japan, Australia, Germany, Poland, Netherlands, Canada, Mexico, Chile, Türkiye, United Arab Emirates, Nigeria, and the Philippines

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 second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 11th NPT Review Conference in 2026 held from July to August, NPDI released a joint statement and submitted joint working papers on transparency (reporting) and accountability, as well as on promoting the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

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 2024 draft resolution took into consideration discussions at the second 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 to make substantial progress on negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) and to enhance transparency, in order to further realize and promote the “Hiroshima Action Plan,” while underscoring the importance of NPT as a cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. Furthermore,

in regard to promoting understanding of the realities of the atomic bombings, the draft resolution also referred to hibakusha (those who have suffered as a result of the use of nuclear weapons), including Nihon Hidankyo, recognized with the Nobel Peace Prize 2024. The resolution was adopted with the support (affirmative votes) of 145 countries at the First Committee of the UN General Assembly in November, and 152 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 Initiatives Through the United Nations (Ministerial Meeting of the UN Security Council on “Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation”)

On March 18, Foreign Minister Kamikawa chaired the Ministerial Meeting of the UN Security Council on “Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation,” which was for the first time under the presidency of Japan. Among the 15 members of the Security Council, ministerial-level representatives from Japan, as well as three countries and the U.S., participated in this meeting. In her statement, Foreign Minister Kamikawa stated that Japan, as the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during war, has led the international community toward a world without nuclear weapons, through various measures such as submitting the Resolution on Nuclear Disarmament, proposing the “Hiroshima Action Plan,” and holding the G7 Summit in Hiroshima, based on the belief that the catastrophes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki must never be repeated. She also stated that it is important to steadily advance realistic and practical efforts to realize a world without nuclear weapons given the increasingly severe situation surrounding nuclear disarmament, and emphasized

that maintaining and strengthening the NPT regime is the cornerstone of such efforts. At the meeting, delegations including those from nuclear-weapon States, namely the U.S., Russia, the UK, France, and China, engaged in active discussions on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation based on the experiences and knowledge of their own countries, and reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and strengthening the NPT regime. The meeting also provided an opportunity to accelerate substantive discussion between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States toward the NPT Review Conference in 2026. Participants from many countries pointed out that the world is once again in a very severe situation and expressed that no other countries are more suitable than Japan to raise this agenda. They also shared their own experiences of visits to Hiroshima, and spoke about the importance of the role of women in conflict and the possible impact of emerging technologies such as AI. (See the Special Feature on page 233.)

G Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)

Japan attaches great importance to promoting the entry into force of the CTBT as a realistic measure for nuclear disarmament where both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States can participate. It continues making diplomatic efforts to call on countries which have not signed or ratified the treaty, including states whose ratifications are necessary for its entry into force. The Eleventh Ministerial Meeting of the Friends of the CTBT was held during the UN General Assembly High-level Week in September. In her statement, Foreign Minister Kamikawa spoke about the importance of promoting the universalization and the early entry into force of the CTBT, along with the strengthening of its verification system, as a part of realistic and practical efforts towards a world without nuclear weapons, amid the increasingly severe international security environment. At the same time, she called on all relevant states to declare new or maintain existing moratoriums on nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion until the Treaty enters into force. At the end of the meeting, a Joint Ministerial Statement

was adopted. It stressed the importance of the early entry into force of the CTBT, urged for early ratification by all states, including states whose ratifications are necessary for entry into force, urged North Korea to take concrete actions toward the complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of its nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, and related programs, highlighted the importance of maintaining nuclear test explosion moratoria, ensuring and strengthening the effectiveness of the CTBT verification regime, and underscored the significance of CTBT at the political level.

H Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT⁽¹⁷⁾)

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, since the adoption of the UN General Assembly resolution calling for an FMCT in 1993, no consensus has been reached on the commencement of negotiations on such a treaty despite decades of discussions in the Conference on Disarmament (CD). In light of such a situation, it was decided at the 71st session of the UN General Assembly in 2016 to establish the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group. Japan actively participated in the preparatory group's discussions, and a report was compiled by the group in 2018.

Furthermore, at the Ministerial Meeting of the UN Security Council on "Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation" chaired by Japan in March 2024, Foreign Minister Kamikawa announced the establishment of the "FMCT Friends" with the aim of maintaining and enhancing political attention on an FMCT. During the UN General Assembly High-level Week in September, Prime Minister Kishida hosted the High-Level Launch Meeting of the Friends of an FMCT, and launched the "FMCT Friends" with high-level representatives of the "FMCT Friends" member states, including U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly, Australian Foreign

⁽¹⁷⁾ 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 device.



Prime Minister Kishida delivering the opening remarks at the High-Level Launch Meeting of the Friends of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) (September 23, New York, U.S.; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

Minister Penny Wong, and the Philippine Foreign Minister Enrique Manalo. In his opening remarks, Prime Minister Kishida emphasized the need for an early start to negotiations on an FMCT, which limits the quantitative improvement of nuclear weapons by banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, as the world is on the cusp of a reversal of the decreasing trend of the number of nuclear arsenals for the first time since the peak of the Cold War. A number of participating countries pointed out the need for political will to realize an early start to negotiations on an FMCT, and the Joint Press Release issued after the meeting affirmed that participants would work closely together to enhance political attention on an FMCT, and cooperate with the relevant countries and partners toward launching negotiations as soon as possible. (See the Special Feature on page 233.)

I 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 realities of the atomic bombings to people around the world, through activities such as translating the testimonies of atomic bomb survivors into other languages,



Courtesy call on Special Advisor to the Prime Minister ISHIHARA Hirotaka by participants of the "Youth Leader Fund for a World Without Nuclear Weapons" training program (August 30, Tokyo)

invitations for young diplomats from various countries to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki through the UN Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament,⁽¹⁸⁾ providing assistance for holding atomic bomb exhibitions overseas,⁽¹⁹⁾ and designating atomic bomb survivors who have given testimonies of their atomic bomb experiences as "Special Communicators for a World without Nuclear Weapons."⁽²⁰⁾

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 realities of the atomic bombings. Under the Fund, courses commenced in December 2023, and in August, 49 young leaders selected among those who completed the online training courses participated in a week-long study tour in Japan, during which they visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Additionally, as the atomic bomb survivors are aging, it is becoming increasingly important to pass

⁽¹⁸⁾ A UN training program aimed at fostering disarmament experts particularly in developing countries. Its implementation was decided at the First United Nations Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD) in 1978. Since 1983, Japan has invited participants of the program (young diplomats and others from various countries) to Japan at the expense of the Government of Japan; as of 2024, 1,027 participants have visited Japan. The study visit to Japan provides a meaningful opportunity to promote understanding of the realities of the atomic bombings through tours of museums in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, talks by atomic bomb survivors about their experiences, and other activities.

⁽¹⁹⁾ 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.

⁽²⁰⁾ From 2010 to 2022, more than 300 atomic bomb survivors have been named "Communicators for a World without Nuclear Weapons."

on the realities of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings across generations and borders. To this end, from 2013 to 2024, Japan conferred the designation of “Youth Communicators for a World without Nuclear Weapons” on more than 750 youths in Japan and overseas.

J Initiatives Toward Future Arms Control and Disarmament

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 of the same year, 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. Furthermore, the aforementioned Resolution on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons also reaffirms the special responsibility of

nuclear-weapon States to initiate arms control dialogues on effective measures to prevent a nuclear arms race.

(2) Non-proliferation and Nuclear Security

A Japan’s Efforts Toward Non-proliferation

As stated in the 2022 National Security Strategy of Japan, 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 proliferation in countries such as North Korea, Iran, and Syria. 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. Furthermore, with growing demand for nuclear energy in recent years, non-proliferation and nuclear security are also becoming increasingly important.

Under these circumstances, Japan has been implementing its non-proliferation policies through international non-proliferation regimes and rules, 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, as well as the aforementioned NPT, CTBT, and FMCT.

Safeguards refer to verification activities for preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, conducted in

SPECIAL
FEATUREMinisterial Meeting of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on “Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation” and Launch of the “Friends of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT¹ Friends)”

On March 18, Foreign Minister Kamikawa hosted the Ministerial Meeting of the UNSC on “Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation.” This meeting covered the agenda of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation for the first time under Japan’s Security Council Presidency and was aimed at promoting dialogue between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. At the outset of the meeting, three speakers, including UN Secretary-General Guterres, gave briefings on the situation and challenges surrounding nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Following that, Foreign Minister Kamikawa delivered a statement, stressing the following four points: (1) With an ever greater sense of urgency, the international community must implement the five actions² set forth in the “Hiroshima Action Plan;” (2) Japan will further strengthen and lead the efforts to embody the five actions of the “Hiroshima Action Plan;” (3) The international community must be united with one voice against any movement that runs counter to a world without nuclear weapons such as by Russia and North Korea; and, (4) The possible impact of emerging technologies such as AI, and the “Women, Peace, and Security (WPS)” perspective, are also important.



Foreign Minister Kamikawa presiding over the Ministerial Meeting of the UNSC on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (March 18, New York, U.S.)

At the same meeting, Foreign Minister Kamikawa announced the establishment of the “FMCT Friends,” a cross-regional group³ comprised of countries from both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. The group aims to maintain and enhance political attention on an FMCT, as well as contribute to expanding support for the immediate commencement of FMCT negotiations. This is a part of efforts to bring about the realization of the “Hiroshima Action Plan” toward a world without nuclear weapons. Following this announcement, Prime Minister Kishida hosted the High-Level Launch Meeting of the Friends of an FMCT on September 23 during the UN General Assembly High-Level Week. The meeting was attended by ministerial-level officials from eight countries,



Representatives of each country attending the High-Level Launch Meeting of the Friends of an FMCT (September 23, New York, U.S.; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

including U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, Philippine Foreign Minister Enrique Manalo, and Nigerian Defense Minister Mohammed Abubakar, as well as senior government officials from other countries. Participants affirmed the establishment of the Friends of an FMCT and confirmed that they will work closely for an early start of negotiations on an FMCT. In his opening remarks, Prime Minister Kishida stated that he is convinced that further increasing political interest in and revitalizing the discussion on an FMCT will build momentum toward an early start of negotiations, which will ultimately lead to the maintenance and strengthening of the NPT regime.

An FMCT, together with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), is an important framework for maintaining the decreasing trend of the global number of nuclear arsenals. As the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during war, Japan will continue to advance realistic and practical efforts toward a world without nuclear weapons, including efforts toward an early start of negotiations on an FMCT through the “FMCT Friends.”

¹ FMCT: Treaty Banning the Production of Fissile Material for Nuclear Weapons or other Nuclear Explosive Devices / Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty

² 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 Hiroshima and Nagasaki by international leaders and others.

³ The 12 participating countries are Japan, the U.S., the UK, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Canada, Australia, Germany, Nigeria, the Philippines, and Brazil.

accordance with safeguards agreements between states and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and aim to ensure that nuclear energy (nuclear materials) will not be diverted from peaceful uses, such as nuclear power generation, 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,⁽²¹⁾ 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).⁽²²⁾ 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 an effort undertaken from the supply-side 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 participates in all of them upon 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,⁽²³⁾ 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. Japan is actively involved in international rule-making and the implementation of rules, and the Permanent Mission of Japan to the International Organizations in Vienna serves as the Point of Contact of the NSG.

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),⁽²⁴⁾ and works jointly with each country to implement and consider possible measures with relevant international and national legal authorities in order to interdict the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missiles, along with related materials. In addition, with regard to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540,⁽²⁵⁾ which was adopted 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.

Non-proliferation measures, including export control, play a role in enhancing the predictability of the

⁽²¹⁾ 13 countries are designated by the IAEA Board of Governors. The designated member states include Japan and other countries with advanced nuclear energy capabilities.

⁽²²⁾ 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 October 2024, 143 countries have concluded the Additional Protocol.

⁽²³⁾ Apart from export control regimes, the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCOC), which includes the principle of exercising restraint in their development and deployment, addresses the issue of ballistic missiles. As of October 2024, 145 countries subscribe to the HCOC.

⁽²⁴⁾ PSI launched in 2003. As of October 2024, 115 countries participate in and support the PSI. 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, including the training hosted by Australia most recently in September 2024.

⁽²⁵⁾ Adopted in April 2004, UN Security Council resolution 1540 obliges all countries to: (a) refrain from providing support to terrorists and other non-state actors attempting to develop weapons of mass destruction; (b) adopt and enforce laws prohibiting the development of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists and other non-state actors; and (c) 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.

■ Japan and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The IAEA is an organization related 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 IAEA, known as the nuclear watchdog, from the perspective of nuclear non-proliferation, plays a key role in implementing safeguards and is also engaged in nuclear non-proliferation challenges in countries such as North Korea and Iran, while also addressing nuclear terrorism. Furthermore, from the perspective of promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the IAEA has been strengthening not only technical support related to nuclear power generation, but also 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. In recent years, it has also been focusing on fusion energy, and its activities range widely.

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, and 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, financial, and technical 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 four occasions, Japan is strengthening cooperation with the IAEA in both nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.



Foreign Minister Kamikawa with IAEA Director General Grossi on his visit to Japan as a guest of MOFA (March 14, Tokyo)

¹ 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.

international business environment and promoting investment and trade. In order to carry out efficient and effective export control while ensuring free trade in the highly globalized world economy, Japan is advancing international coordination efforts, including the harmonization and strengthening of the national export control systems of various countries, in cooperation with Japan's industry and academia which have advanced technologies. In this regard, Japan holds the Asia Senior-level Talks on Non-Proliferation (ASTOP)⁽²⁶⁾ and the Asian Export Control Seminar⁽²⁷⁾

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 2024, North Korea conducted launches of ballistic missiles, including an Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM)-class as well as a launch using ballistic missile technology for the purpose of a satellite launch. This series of actions by North Korea is a flagrant violation of relevant UN Security Council

⁽²⁶⁾ 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 19th meeting was held in October 2024, and discussions were held on topics such as proliferation challenges in Asia and the strengthening of export control.

⁽²⁷⁾ 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. (It was suspended only in 2021 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.)

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 also actively communicated to the international community the importance of addressing North Korea's nuclear issue at The Secondary Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference held from July to August, as well as the IAEA General Conference in September, and the IAEA Board of Governors' Meetings.

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. Military cooperation such as the transfer of ballistic missiles from North Korea to Russia is a flagrant violation of UN Security Council resolutions, and 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 U.S. (administration under President Trump's first term) from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)⁽²⁸⁾ in 2018 and the reimposition of independent sanctions on Iran, Iran has continued actions to reduce its commitments under the JCPOA. In February 2021, Iran suspended the implementation of transparency measures under the JCPOA including the 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 rebuilding of JCPOA by both the U.S. and Iran. Deeply concerned by Iran's continued reduction of its commitments under the JCPOA, Japan has repeatedly urged Iran to refrain from further measures that may undermine the JCPOA and to fully return to its commitments under the JCPOA.

In March 2023, IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi visited 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 matters such as the safeguards issues. Subsequently, as the cooperation between the two sides, including the implementation of the joint statement, stagnated, a resolution was issued at the IAEA Board of Governor's meeting in June, calling upon Iran to fully cooperate with the IAEA without any further delay. In November, Director General Grossi revisited Iran once again and engaged in discussions on cooperation between the two sides. Based on the outcomes of the discussion, another resolution was issued at the Board of Governor's meeting in November requesting the Director General to produce

⁽²⁸⁾ 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 300kg, 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.

a comprehensive and updated assessment on Iran's safeguards issue. 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, missile, and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) 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, and the issue remains unresolved and under discussion to this day. The IAEA visited three facilities related to the undeclared construction of nuclear reactors by October 2024. Future developments of this issue will be our concern. 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.

C Nuclear Security

Nuclear security is aimed at preventing acts of terrorism involving the use of nuclear and other radioactive materials. In the wake of the September 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S., there has been growing recognition of the importance of nuclear security as a counter-terrorism measure. Thereafter, multilateral conferences, including the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT), Nuclear Security Summit, and the International Conference on Nuclear Security (ICONS) have been held with a view to strengthening nuclear security. Progress has been also made in cooperation in the international community, with the entry into force of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism in 2007 and of the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material in 2015. However, as the activities of GICNT conducted under the joint chairs of the U.S. and Russia came to a standstill due to

Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the U.S. launched the Global Forum to Prevent Radiological and Nuclear Terrorism (Global FTPRNT). At the inaugural meeting held in November, the participants discussed measures on how to enhance nuclear counter-terrorism capabilities, among other matters. It also called for efforts to ensure the safety and security of nuclear facilities in Ukraine.

In May, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUJI Kiyoto attended the ministerial-level meeting of 4th ICONS organized by the IAEA, where he delivered a speech on behalf of the Government of Japan. In his speech, State Minister Tsuji stated that, amid growing energy demand in every country and a global trend toward decarbonization, as well as growing interest in nuclear power generation in the international community, it is necessary for countries advancing the peaceful use of nuclear energy to raise awareness of nuclear security, such as the proliferation risk of nuclear weapons and nuclear materials to non-state actors, and to work toward ensuring the highest level of nuclear security standards. With regard to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, he stated that the "seven indispensable pillars of nuclear safety and security"⁽²⁹⁾ set out by the IAEA Director General should not be compromised, and that Japan, under the leadership of the IAEA Director General, will continue to contribute toward ensuring the highest level of nuclear security standards in the international community in collaboration with the IAEA and the other countries engaging in relevant activities.

The IAEA General Conference held in September engaged in discussions on Ukraine's nuclear safety, security and safeguards, and a resolution was adopted by a majority vote that expressed concern over Russia's failure to heed previous resolutions of the IAEA Board of Governors calling for the immediate cessation of all actions against and at Ukraine's nuclear facilities and commended and supported IAEA's efforts to ensure nuclear safety in Ukraine, including the IAEA Director

(29) 1. The physical integrity of the facilities – whether it is the reactors, fuel ponds, or radioactive waste stores – must be maintained;
2. All safety and security systems and equipment must be fully functional at all times;
3. The operating staff must be able to fulfil their safety and security duties and have the capacity to make decisions free of undue pressure;
4. There must be secure off-site power supply from the grid for all nuclear sites;
5. There must be uninterrupted logistical supply chains and transportation to and from the sites;
6. There must be effective on-site and off-site radiation monitoring systems and emergency preparedness and response measures;
7. There must be reliable communications with the regulator and others.

General's Seven Pillars and five principles.⁽³⁰⁾ Japan will continue to strongly condemn Russia's aggression, including its seizure of nuclear facilities, and to support the IAEA's efforts to ensure the nuclear safety and security 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. Against the backdrop of growing global energy demand and rising interest in decarbonized energy sources, many countries use, or plan to use, nuclear power.⁽³¹⁾ In light of such global trends, the First Nuclear Energy Summit was convened in Brussels, Belgium, in March 2024. Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, KOMURA Masahiro, attended the Summit on behalf of Japan.

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";⁽³²⁾ that is, (a) Safeguards, (b) Nuclear Safety (e.g. measures to ensure safety to prevent nuclear accidents), and (c) 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 enhancing 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, medical treatment, food, 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 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 cancer control projects, projects to address the food issue, and projects to address the marine plastic waste issue. In November, the Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science, Technology and Applications and the Technical Cooperation Programme, pertaining to the use of nuclear science and technology and IAEA's technical cooperation activities in this field, was held for the first time in six years in Vienna. State Minister for Foreign Affairs MIYAJI Takuma attended the conference on behalf of Japan. In addition to presenting Japan's initiatives, he expressed the hope that this Ministerial Conference would provide greater impetus to promoting the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology.

B Bilateral Nuclear Cooperation Agreement

Bilateral nuclear cooperation agreements are concluded to establish a legal framework required for ensuring a

⁽³⁰⁾ 1. There should be no attack of any kind from or against the plant, in particular targeting the reactors, spent fuel storage, other critical infrastructure, or personnel;
2. Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) should not be used as storage or a base for heavy weapons (i.e., multiple rocket launchers, artillery systems and munitions, and tanks) or military personnel that could be used for an attack from the plant;
3. Off-site power to the plant should not be put at risk. To that effect, all efforts should be made to ensure that off-site power remains available and secure at all times;
4. All structures, systems and components essential to the safe and secure operation of ZNPP should be protected from attacks or acts of sabotage;
5. No action should be taken that undermines these principles.

⁽³¹⁾ According to the IAEA, 415 nuclear reactors are in operation worldwide and 63 reactors are under construction (IAEA website; as of November 2024).

⁽³²⁾ "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.

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 them. Under such bilateral agreements, cooperation in areas such as the improvement of nuclear safety 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 its partner country, and its trust in and expectations toward Japan, as well as the bilateral relationship between the two countries among others. As of December, 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 is 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 the 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 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 (a) the approach to the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea, and the associated activities, are consistent with relevant international safety standards, (b) that the discharge of the ALPS treated water will have a negligible radiological impact on people and the environment, and (c) 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, 2023, the discharge of ALPS treated water commenced on August 24 the same year. ALPS treated water is being discharged as planned, and safety has been confirmed based on the monitoring results to date.

After the start of the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea, the IAEA conducted three safety review missions in October 2023 and April and December 2024. In the published reports on the First and Second Review Missions conducted after the start of the discharge into the sea, the IAEA also reaffirmed the fundamental conclusions of the safety review as outlined in the Comprehensive Report dated July 4, 2023.

In the light of the interest of the concerned countries, Japan and the IAEA concurred in conducting additional measures under the IAEA's framework on September 20. On the same day, the two countries announced a "Shared Recognition between Japan and China" regarding the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea and China's import restrictions on Japanese aquatic products, which mentioned that after conducting additional measures under the framework of the IAEA, the Chinese government will initiate adjustment of its import restrictions on Japanese aquatic products, and will steadily restore imports of Japanese aquatic products. As a part of additional measures, seawater sampling was carried out on October 15 by the experts from the participating countries (China, the ROK and Switzerland) under the IAEA's framework.

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 nuclear power station accident and provided and disseminated information through Japanese diplomatic missions overseas or through social media and other means.

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.

(4) Biological and Chemical Weapons

A Biological Weapons

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)⁽³³⁾ 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)⁽³⁴⁾ comprehensively prohibits the development, production, stockpiling, and use of chemical weapons, and stipulates that all chemical weapons stockpiles 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 free of chemical weapons were highly acclaimed, and the Organisation was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013.

Japan, which has a highly developed chemicals industry and numerous chemicals factories, accepts numerous OPCW inspections.

Japan also actively cooperates with the OPCW in many other concrete ways. In March, Japan contributed about 26 million Japanese yen to the OPCW to contribute to chemical weapon protection and assistance in Ukraine. This fund will be used to provide Ukraine with chemical identification analyzers through the OPCW. In addition, Japan is engaged in efforts to increase the number of States Parties, as well as to enhance the effectiveness of the CWC by strengthening the national implementation measures of the CWC by States Parties.

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.

⁽³³⁾ Entered into force in March 1975. As of December 2024, 187 countries or regions are parties to the BWC.

⁽³⁴⁾ Entered into force in April 1997. As of December 2024, 193 countries or regions are parties to the CWC.

(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 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 funding facility established under UN Secretary-General Guterres’ Agenda for Disarmament to address the issue of small arms and light weapons, and projects to support countries affected by illicit small arms and light weapons are implemented through this funding facility.

B The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)⁽³⁵⁾

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 Presidency elected from the Asia-Pacific region in August 2018. At the Tenth Conference of State Parties to the ATT (held in August) marking the 10th anniversary since the ATT entered into force, a Political Declaration affirming the importance of the ATT was issued. Japan served as the chair of the Working Group on Transparency and Reporting (WGTR) at the Conference, contributing proactively to promoting the implementation of the ATT.

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)⁽³⁶⁾

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

⁽³⁵⁾ As of December 2024, there are 116 states and regions that are parties to the ATT. Japan signed the Treaty on the date it was opened for signing and deposited its instrument of acceptance in May 2014.

⁽³⁶⁾ As of December 2024, 128 countries and regions are parties to the CCW.

on international rule-making. In March 2023, Japan submitted the “Draft articles on autonomous weapon systems – prohibitions and other regulatory measures on the basis of international humanitarian law” to the GGE, with the U.S., the UK, Australia, Canada, and the ROK. At the GGE meeting convened in March 2023, a report incorporating the prohibition of weapons systems that cannot adhere to international humanitarian laws and the restriction of other weapons systems, was adopted unanimously. Furthermore, in light of the UN General Assembly resolution on LAWS, a working paper summarizing Japan's views on LAWS was submitted in May 2024 for the purpose of contributing to the preparation of the Report of the Secretary-General and discussions within the GGE.

Against the backdrop of increasingly active international discussions on the impact of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), on the military domain, the second summit of Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain (REAIM) was held in the ROK in September.

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)⁽³⁷⁾ 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.”



Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs ERI Arfiya attending an event held jointly with the Cambodian Mine Action Centre during the Fifth Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines (November 24, Siem Reap, Cambodia)

The Fifth Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention held in Siem Reap, Cambodia, in November, was attended by Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs ERI Arfiya. In her statement, she reflected on Japan's initiatives and achievements to date in supporting mine action, and in light that Japan will preside over the 22nd Meeting of States Parties in 2025, declared that it will continue to work toward the steadfast implementation and universalization of the Ottawa Convention.

E Cluster Munitions⁽³⁸⁾

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.⁽³⁹⁾ Japan is also continuing its efforts to increase the number of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM).⁽⁴⁰⁾ At the 12th Meeting of States Parties to the CCM held in September, Japan participated in discussions concerning these issues and shared its proactive efforts.

⁽³⁷⁾ The Convention, which entered into force in 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 2024, there are 164 states and regions that are parties to the Convention, including Japan.

⁽³⁸⁾ 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.

⁽³⁹⁾ See the White Paper on Development Cooperation for specific efforts on international cooperation regarding cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ 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 111 states and regions that are parties to the Convention, including Japan (as of December 2024)

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 member states as of December 2024). 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 its 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 served for the 12th time as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council from January 2023 to December 2024, the most frequent among all UN Member States. Throughout its two-year term on the Security Council, Japan played a key role and worked proactively on a wide range of issues aimed at maintaining peace and security in the international community through close communication and dialogue with each country, while cooperating to ensure that the Security Council fulfills its primary role. (See “Summary of Japan’s Term as a Non-Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council (Statement by Foreign Minister Iwaya)” on page 244.) 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)) With the international order undergoing major upheavals, it is becoming more important than before to strengthen international norms based on the rule of law. Japan is working proactively to strengthen the functions of the UN, including UN Security Council reform, with a view to strengthening multilateralism with the UN at its core.

(2) Major Events in 2024

In March, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited New York and presided over the Ministerial Meeting of the

UN Security Council on “Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation,” Japan’s first as the chair of the UN Security Council and the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during the war. She also held a meeting with UN Secretary-General António Guterres, where she stated that Japan would continue and strengthen its efforts in disarmament and non-proliferation. Both sides agreed to cooperate to strengthen multilateralism, and exchanged views on the Middle East situation, the situation in Ukraine, the response to North Korea including the abductions issue, and the promotion of Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), among other topics.

Japan also hosted the UN Security Council meeting on peacebuilding during the same month. As it has contributed during previous terms, Japan continued to work on improving the work methods of the UN Security Council, including enhancing the efficiency and transparency of the Council.

The High-Level Week of the 79th UN General Assembly convened in September. Prime Minister Kishida and Foreign Minister Kamikawa attended from Japan.

At the Plenary Meeting of the Summit of the Future, the outcome document, “Pact for the Future,” which sets out 56 actions to protect the interests of current and future generations, was adopted. This outcome document covers the rule of law, human dignity, and the realization of a world without nuclear weapons, and for the first time, concrete details on UN Security



Foreign Minister Kamikawa presiding over the Ministerial Meeting of the UN Security Council on “Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation” (March 18, New York, U.S.)

■ Summary of Japan's Term as a Non-Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council (Statement by Foreign Minister Iwaya)

1. For two years from the beginning of 2023 to the end of 2024, Japan served as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the 12th time, the most among the UN Member States. During this period, Japan was facing the most severe security environment since the end of World War II, and the existing international order has been challenged. Against this backdrop, Japan prioritized the rule of law, peacebuilding, and nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, making the utmost contribution to the realization and maintenance of international peace and security.
2. In response to repeated launches of ballistic missiles by North Korea, Japan worked closely with the United States, the Republic of Korea, and other countries concerned, and led the discussions at the UNSC to demonstrate a resolute stance against North Korea's provocations in violation of the relevant UNSC resolutions. In addition, an open briefing of the UNSC on "The situation in the DPRK" was held upon requests from Japan and other countries concerned for the first time since 2017 in August 2023 and again in June 2024, which fostered international discussion with a view to improving North Korea's human rights situation, including the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.
3. Through meetings of the UNSC and the UN General Assembly, Japan expressed its strong condemnation of Russia's protracted aggression against Ukraine, called for the immediate withdrawal of Russian military forces, and advocated for the realization of a just and lasting peace in Ukraine based on the Charter of the United Nations. Furthermore, Japan strongly condemned the advancement of military cooperation between Russia and North Korea, including the deployment of North Korean troops to Russia and their engagement in combat against Ukraine, as well as Russia's procurement and use of North Korean weapons and munitions.
4. Regarding the situation surrounding Gaza, which has been facing a humanitarian catastrophe since the terror attacks by Hamas and others in October 2023, Japan contributed to the adoption of four UNSC resolutions calling for a ceasefire and the release of hostages to ensure that the UNSC fulfills its responsibility since October 2023. Notably, during Japan's presidency in March 2024, the Council was able to adopt a resolution demanding the parties to realize a ceasefire while Japan vigorously coordinated with other Council members as the President of the Council and a co-penholder.
5. Japan also contributed to discussions on key thematic issues, such as Women, Peace and Security (WPS), Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), humanitarian issues, food security, climate change, AI, and outer space. Taking the opportunity of its Presidency of the UNSC twice during its term, Japan hosted a ministerial-level open debate on the rule of law in January 2023, and a ministerial meeting on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in March 2024, as well as two open debates on peacebuilding.
6. Over the two-year period, Japan, as a penholder on Afghanistan, led the negotiations on related documents including UNSC resolutions. Japan also actively addressed other complex issues facing the international community, such as the situations in Myanmar, Middle East, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, Japan chaired UNSC subsidiary bodies, including the Libya Sanctions Committee and the Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee, and sought to realize their appropriate operations.
7. Enhancing the transparency and efficiency of the UNSC will lead to strengthening the functions of the UN. In 2024, Japan assumed the chairmanship of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, a subsidiary body of the UNSC, and compiled a comprehensive and systematic Note by the President on the working methods of the Council and related matters. Japan's leadership in improving the operations and strengthening the functions of the UNSC during each of its Council membership terms since 2006 has been highly praised by a wide range of UN Member States.
8. This year marks the 80th anniversary of the establishment of the UN. Even after the end of its term as a non-permanent member, Japan will continue to advance multilateral diplomacy with the UN at its core, and make a proactive contribution to realizing and maintaining international peace and security, with a view to leading the increasingly divided and confrontational international community toward cooperation.
9. At the same time, the UNSC, which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, must be reformed in order to reflect the present world. Japan aspires to realize early UNSC reform, including the expansion of both permanent and non-permanent membership, and secure a permanent seat on the Council. Working with many other countries, Japan will continue to make persistent efforts to this end.



Prime Minister Kishida delivering a speech at the Plenary Meeting of the Summit of the Future (September 22, New York, U.S.; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

reforms at the leaders' level. In his address delivered at the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Kishida stressed once again the importance of these elements, and called strongly on the international community to share responsibility and unite under the banner of multilateralism.

At the High-Level Launch Meeting of the Friends of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) organized by Japan, Prime Minister Kishida, together with ministers and high-level government officials from 12 Friends of FMCT member states comprising both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States, including U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, confirmed close cooperation toward the early start of negotiations on an FMCT. In his opening remarks, Prime Minister Kishida, pointed out the need for an early start to negotiations on an FMCT in view that the world is on the cusp of a reversal of the decreasing trend of the number of nuclear arsenals for the first time since the peak of the Cold War. Furthermore, in his address at the UN General Assembly, he highlighted the importance of strengthening governance at both national and international levels as one of the foundations for uniting the international community to strengthen the rule of law and protect human dignity in these difficult times when divisions and confrontations are deepening (the address was delivered by Ambassador Yamazaki, Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations, on behalf of Prime Minister Kishida).

Prime Minister Kishida also took the opportunity of the UN High-level Week to meet with the leaders and high-level officials of eight countries and organizations, and exchanged opinions actively on various



Meeting between Prime Minister Kishida and UN Secretary-General Guterres at the UN General Assembly High-level Week (September 22, New York, U.S.; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

issues and bilateral relations in the international arena. In his meeting with UN Secretary-General Guterres, Prime Minister Kishida highlighted the importance of cooperating with the UN on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation toward the realization of a world without nuclear weapons, and expressed his stance of promoting commitment to multilateralism. He also stressed the importance of increasing the number of Japanese staff in the UN organizations and agencies. Secretary-General Guterres thanked Japan for its cooperation with the UN and shared the recognition of the importance of multilateralism with the UN at its core.

During his stay in New York, Prime Minister Kishida attended the U.S.-Japan Tourism Event and a finance-related event hosted by Bloomberg. At the U.S.-Japan Tourism Event, he promoted the diverse sightseeing attractions, food, and alcohol from various parts of Japan, such as Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, the Sado Island Gold Mines, and Japanese sake from Noto. At the Bloomberg-hosted finance event, he announced the launch of an Asset Management Forum that will allow Japanese and U.S. asset management companies and others to promote investment and engage in dialogues on the reform of the asset management industry. During her short stay, Foreign Minister Kamikawa engaged in discussions with foreign ministers from 15 countries and organizations, including the Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the G4 Countries on UN Security Council Reform, the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and the Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting, holding various intensive and strategic talks and meetings that covered priority issues for Japan's diplomacy. Through the meetings with various

countries, she strived to further boost cooperation with like-minded countries on addressing various issues, sending out a strong message on the importance of the UN and on strengthening its functions, including reform of the UN Security Council, while affirming cooperation on the regional situation in Ukraine, the Middle East, and North Korea.

(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 Women, Peace, and Security (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).

B Reform of the UN Security Council

The composition of the UN Security Council has largely remained unchanged since the establishment of the UN, even amid significant changes to the structure of the international community and diversification of the UN's functions today. 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 (IGN) on UN Security Council reform. Eight meetings took place during the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, between December 2023 and June 2024. During the 78th session, concrete discussions were held on the reform model (various proposals on the allocation of seats or on veto, including the G4 model or Africa model, by Member States/groups, and other details) through the initiative of the joint chairs of IGN on Security Council Reform, with the support of the Member States. In October, Philemon Yang, President of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly, reappointed the Permanent Representatives of the State of Kuwait and of Austria as Co-Chairs of the IGN. As they continue with the work from the 78th session, the spotlight will be placed on how future discussions will progress.

"Pact for the Future," the outcome document of the Summit of the Future held at the UN General Assembly in September, was the first concrete, leaders' level outcome document on UN Security Council reforms, and it provided impetus for advancing initiatives going forward. Examples of the outcomes include: (a) mention of the "urgent" need for UN Security Council reform;



Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the G4 Countries on UN Security Council Reform (September 23, New York, U.S.)

SPECIAL
FEATUREThe Role of the Panel of Experts for the UN Security Council
1718 Sanctions Committee

■ Activities of the Panel of Experts

The Panel of Experts (PoE) for assisting the UN Security Council 1718 Sanctions Committee was established pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1874 (2009). Since then, the PoE has monitored and published reports on cases of UN sanctions violations and evasions, including North Korea's nuclear and missile development, foreign currency acquisition through the dispatch of workers overseas, cryptocurrency thefts carried out through cyberattacks, and illicit transactions through ship-to-ship transfers.¹

Every report needs to be signed by all eight PoE members before its publication. The PoE discusses draft reports in July and January each year, and former PoE members have said that discussions often become heated during this process. The reports adopted by consensus in the Security Council after these discussions have pointed out examples of activities that violate or evade the relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as the countries, organizations, and individuals involved in such activities. UN Member States have referred to this information in their domestic efforts toward ensuring full implementation of Security Council resolutions, and have maintained and strengthened UN sanctions on North Korea accordingly.

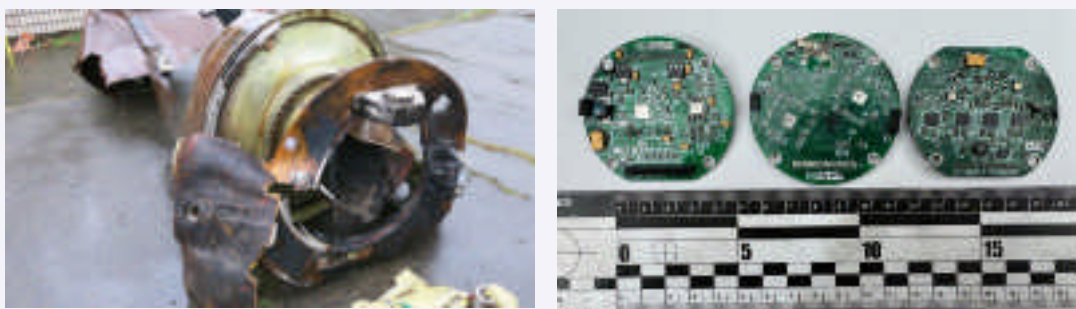
■ Activities Terminated due to Exercise of Veto by Russia

Reports by the PoE in recent years contain the cases regarding the transfer of military supplies from North Korea to Russia. However, in late March 2024, Russia exercised its veto on the draft Security Council resolution regarding the extension of the mandate of the PoE, which led to the end of 15 years of the PoE's activities at the end of April.

A former member of the PoE commented that despite the mounting piles of cases to be investigated, they have worked to the very end with a strong determination to raise awareness among the public on the activities of countries, organizations, and individuals involved in violation and evasions of the UN sanctions, and to promote full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. The cases under investigation included the one regarding the short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) used by Russia in its attacks against Ukraine.

■ Final mission: Inspection of North Korea-made SRBMs in Ukraine

In early January, it was revealed that Russia had used North Korea-made SRBMs in its attacks against Ukraine. The PoE immediately communicated to the Government of Ukraine its wish to conduct an on-site investigation, but the PoE members from Japan, the UK, and the ROK only arrived in Ukraine in mid-April, just before the activities of the PoE were due to be terminated. As its final mission, the PoE obtained information indicating that the SRBM was made by North Korea and launched from inside Russia. It submitted the findings to the Security Council, which pointed to violations of Security Council resolutions by Russia and North Korea.



Some of the parts of a North Korea-made SRBM being examined by the PoE in Ukraine
(April, Ukraine; Photo: Former member of the PoE)

■ Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team: A new initiative to ensure implementation of UN sanctions

Although the activities of the PoE were terminated, UN Member States are still obligated to implement Security Council resolutions. In this regard, as one of the alternatives to the PoE, Japan, together with like-minded countries, established the Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (MSMT) in October. Going forward, Japan continues to play a role in ensuring the effectiveness of sanctions on North Korea by cooperating with like-minded countries to support implementation of resolutions by UN Member States through the regular publication of information on violations and evasions of UN sanctions, and by utilizing existing platforms such as the Asian Export Control Seminar.

- 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 UN member states from facilitating or engaging in.

(b) establishment of an indirect timeline for the UN Security Council reform by taking into consideration SDG 16.8, one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at broadening and strengthening the participation of developing countries in international organizations by 2030; (c) calling for the development of a consolidated model based on various reform models; (d) calling for agreement on the issue of expanding seat categories, based on IGN discussions to date; (e) encouraging restraint on the use of veto in the UN Security Council.

Japan also places great importance on the initiatives 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 participants welcomed the international community's call for urgent reform of the UN Security Council set out in “Pact for the Future,” and looking ahead to the 80th anniversary of the establishment of the UN in 2025, concurred on working with the relevant countries including Africa and the U.S. to achieve concrete progress as soon as possible. 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 2024, he proposed concrete measures for the UN to adapt to a new era, including his initiative to organize the Summit of the Future. 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 2025 amounting to approximately 3.72 billion U.S. dollars was approved in December 2024 at the UN General Assembly. The budget for peacekeeping operations for the period of 2024-2025 amounting to approximately 5.59 billion U.S. dollars in total was approved in June 2024.

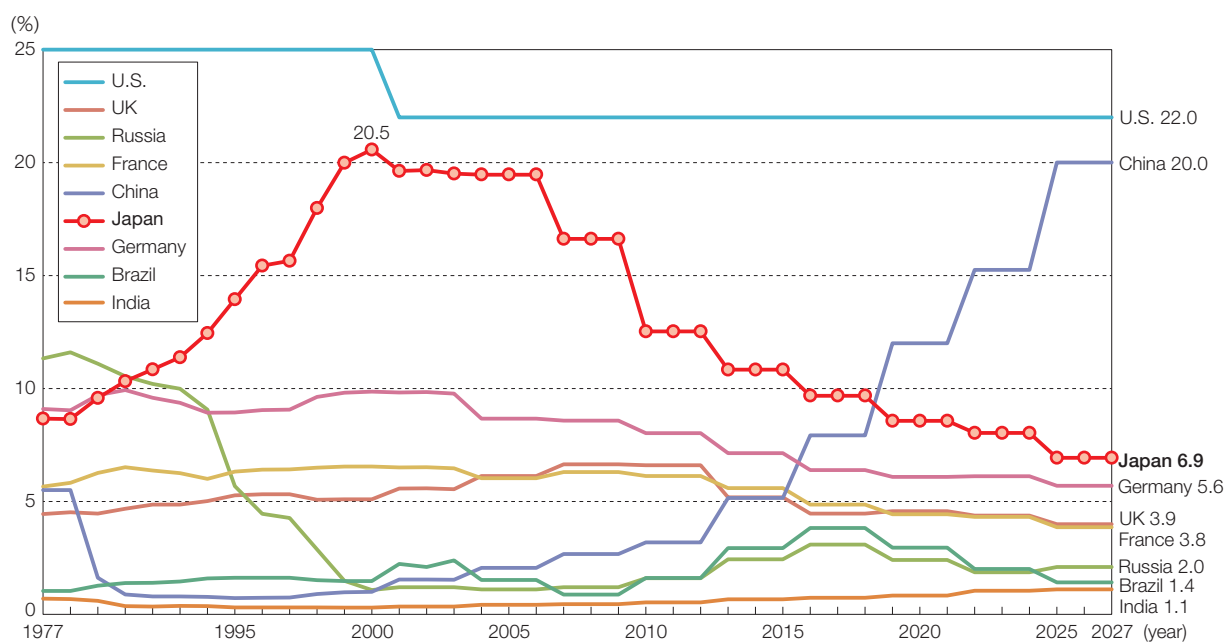
The budget to support UN activities is composed of assessed contributions mandatorily paid by Member States and voluntary contributions provided in accordance with Member States' policy needs. With regard

to assessed contributions, Japan currently ranks third following the U.S. and China. Japan contributed approximately 253.11 million U.S. dollars to the UN regular budget for 2024, and approximately 418.44 million U.S. dollars to the peacekeeping budget for 2024/25. As a major financial contributor, Japan has been encouraging the UN to make more efficient and effective use of its financial resources. The scale

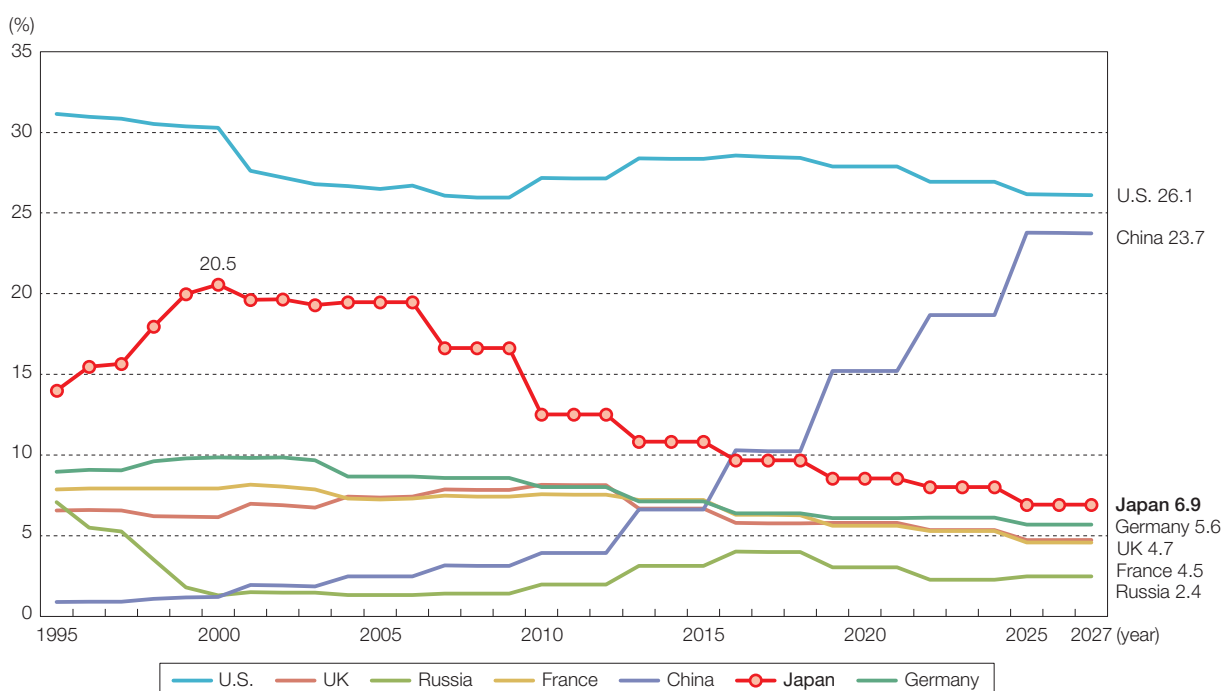
of assessments, which provides the basis for calculating the amount of assessed contributions, is revised every three years based on the capacities to pay of the Member States. Japan's scale of assessment, revised at the end of 2024, is 6.930% (2025-2027), behind the U.S. and China.

Key bodies that address administrative and budgetary matters of the UN are the Advisory Committee on

■ Trends in UN Regular Budget Scale of Assessments of Top Contributors (%)



■ Trends in UN PKO Budget Scale of Assessments of Top Contributors (%)



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 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 international judicial organizations to strengthen their functions via both human resource and financial contributions, and makes proactive efforts on international cooperation in relation to the rule of law by supporting the improvement of legal systems and organizing events on international law.

In light of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the situation in the Middle East, it is becoming more

important to strengthen the rule of law. In January, 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 Prosecutor of the ICC in The Hague (Netherlands) Karim A. A. Khan KC. She also met with Judge Tomas Heidar, President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) in Hamburg (Germany). Foreign Minister Kamikawa shared a sense of crisis on the current situation in the international community with its deepening divisions and confrontations, 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. As a part of these efforts, Japan submitted a written statement in July 2023 regarding the request for advisory opinion of ICJ on Occupied Palestinian Territory, and participated in the public sitting to deliver its oral statement in February. The statements set out Japan's views on the legal issues surrounding the principle of the prohibition on acquisition of territory by force, an important element of the rule of law in the international community. (See the Special Feature on page 251.) Concerning the request for advisory opinion for the ICJ on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change, Japan also submitted its written statement in March and participated in the public sitting to deliver its oral statement in December. This written statement presented Japan's basic stance on climate change measures as well as its initiatives, and set out its views on the obligations and legal consequences under international law in the area of climate change.

SPECIAL
FEATUREAttending the Oral Proceedings for the Request for
Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice
(ICJ) Concerning Occupied Palestinian Territory

In December 2022, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution requesting an advisory opinion from the ICJ on “Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.” This request for an advisory opinion could hold great significance in garnering broader support on the importance of “the rule of law among nations,” as well as the “prohibition of the acquisition of territory by force,” the core element of the rule of law, which Japan has been advocating to the international community through its G7 Presidency and as a member of the Security Council. Against this backdrop, Japan participated actively in both written statements and oral proceedings to present its legal position. In general, the ICJ’s advisory opinion is not legally binding, but it carries great weight from the perspective of the rule of law, as the contents of the advisory opinion may contribute to clarifying principles and rules under international law.

Japan submitted a written statement to the ICJ in July 2023 and participated in the public sitting to deliver its oral statement in February 2024. In this process, Japan conducted intensive deliberation with the cooperation of Dapo Akande, Professor of the University of Oxford. This was the first time in 29 years that Japan participated in the oral proceedings for an advisory opinion at the ICJ, after it did so in November 1995 on the “Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons.”

In its statement, Japan reiterated its basic position on the Middle East peace process and set out its views on the legal issues concerning the principle of the “prohibition of the acquisition of territory by force,” which is the core element of the rule of law. Japan addressed questions such as which territory this principle applies to, whether an action which lacks clear indication of intention for annexation could amount to acquisition of territory by force, and whether the use of force for self-defense could justify acquisition of territorial title.¹

When the advisory opinion was issued in July 2024, some ICJ judges, while referring to Japan’s statements, appreciated Japan’s approach as being consistent with the main considerations in the advisory opinion. Based on this, Japan’s statements can be considered to have contributed to a certain degree to the discussions and deliberations at the ICJ. For Japan, which is facing a severe security environment including unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion, it is important to continue making its voice heard, so that the importance of adhering to the principle of the “prohibition of the acquisition of territory by force,” which is a corollary of Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter that prohibits the use of force, becomes more deeply rooted in the international community.

Japan will actively engage in the efforts to promote the rule of law in the international community by continuing its contribution to the activities of the ICJ.



Japanese Delegation at the oral proceedings (February 22, the Hague, Netherlands; Photo: ICJ)

¹ Refers to the basis for the legitimate exercise of rights under international law

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 jurisdiction⁽⁴¹⁾ 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 a major financial contributor to the ICC and the Permanent Court

⁽⁴¹⁾ 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).

of Arbitration (PCA). In terms of human resources, a number of Japanese judges serve on international judicial bodies as of 2024, such as ICJ Judge IWASAWA Yuji (incumbent since 2018), Judge HORINOUCHI Hidehisa to ITLOS (incumbent since 2023), and ICC President AKANE Tomoko (ICC judge since 2018 and elected as the President of ICC in March 2024). Also, 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, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) 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, MOFA 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 proposing and realizing the enlargement of the membership of UNCITRAL as well as projects in the field of dispute settlement, acceding to the United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation negotiated at UNCITRAL in 2023, and being elected at the election of UNCITRAL members in 2024.

In UNIDROIT, KANDA Hideki, Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo, serves as chair of the Working Group on the Legal Nature of Voluntary Carbon Credits (incumbent from 2014), and contributes to leading-edge discussions on carbon credits.

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 examines questions related to public international law under the Council of Europe (CoE). In August, following on from 2023, MOFA organized the Tokyo International Law Seminar, a training program for practitioners 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 an effort to foster professionals in the field of international law. As part of the Tokyo International Law Seminar, 2024 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.

(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).

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 169 countries (including some regions not officially recognized as nations by Japan; as of December 2024) including Japan 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. 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 ITLOS and has successively produced Japanese judges to ITLOS since its establishment. Former Ambassador for UNCLOS HORINOUCHI Hidehisa is currently serving as a judge (nine-year term starting from October 2023).

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 YAMAZAKI Toshitsugu, Professor Emeritus at the University of Tokyo and Guest Professor at Kochi University (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 the Council's Session held twice in 2024, deliberations were held on regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. Japan participates actively in negotiations to ensure that its position is reflected in the regulations. Japan has consistently

served on the ISA's Council since its establishment and was re-elected at the Assembly convened in August (for a new four-year term from January 2025).

Concerning 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) adopted in June 2023 (yet to enter into force as of December 2024), a Preparatory Commission was established in June to prepare for the convening of the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Agreement. Japan participates actively in the activities of the Preparatory Commission from the position of emphasizing the balance between conservation and sustainable use.

(3) Initiatives in the Political and Security Fields

Japan is actively engaged in concluding international agreements in the political and security field in order to strengthen its legal basis for diplomatic activities. Regarding the Reciprocal Access Agreements (RAA) that establish procedures when the defense force of one country conducts activities while visiting another country as well as define the status of the visiting force, Japan announced the start of negotiations with France in May, and signed an agreement with the Philippines in July.

With regard to Agreements concerning Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services ("Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreements," or ACSA), which establish 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's ACSA with Germany entered into force in July, while negotiations with Italy commenced in June that led to the signing of an agreement in November.

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, the agreement signed with the United Arab Emirates in May 2023 entered into force in January, while an agreement was signed with Mongolia in December. Japan also announced the start of negotiations on an agreement with Finland in December. As for Information Security Agreements, Japan reached an agreement in principle in negotiations with New Zealand in June, and also signed an agreement with Ukraine in November.

(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 has negotiated and signed or concluded include tax conventions, investment treaties, and social security agreements with various countries and regions. Furthermore, Japan also 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 Protocol on the Accession of the United Kingdom to the CPTPP entered into force in December, and it participated actively in discussions toward the General Review of the CPTPP. As for the Japan-EU EPA, the Protocol Amending the Agreement, including provisions on the free flow of data, entered into force in July. The Protocol Amending the Agreement between Japan and the Republic of Indonesia for an Economic Partnership was also signed in August.

Furthermore, Japan, with a view to protecting and enhancing the livelihoods and activities of Japanese citizens and companies, is utilizing the dispute settlement system of the WTO and other means to ensure the proper implementation of existing international agreements.

In social areas such as human rights, labor, social security, environment, health, fisheries, aviation, and

culture, 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 social security sector, the Agreement between Japan and the Republic of Austria on Social Security was signed in January, along with the conclusion of the Agreement between Japan and the Italian Republic on Social Security during the same month. In the aviation sector, the Japan-Czech Republic Air Services Agreement and the Japan-Luxembourg Air Services Agreement was each signed in February and in June. In the cultural sector, the Japan-Italy Film Co-production Agreement 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 2024. Moreover, Japan has consistently produced judges since its accession to the ICC, and Judge 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) was elected as the President of the ICC in March. 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) elected as a member of Committee on Budget and Finance, among others. In the ICC's work to promote the rule of law in the international community, it is becoming increasingly important 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 through fora such as the working groups of the Assembly of States Parties. In February 2025, the U.S. announced sanctions on ICC officials. Japan has consistently supported the ICC from a position that places importance on ICC conducting its activities safely while maintaining its independence.

Furthermore, to address cross-border crimes, Japan is further working on ensuring judicial cooperation in criminal matters, such as providing necessary evidence for 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),⁽⁴²⁾ the Treaty on Extradition,⁽⁴³⁾ and the Treaty on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons.⁽⁴⁴⁾ In January, Japan and Brazil signed the MLAT.

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

⁽⁴²⁾ A legal framework that allows for efficient and prompt cooperation with legal authorities of other countries in investigations, prosecution, and other criminal procedures.

⁽⁴³⁾ A legal framework having comprehensive and detailed provisions regarding the extradition of criminals to enable more effective cooperation for repressing crime.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ 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.

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 in 2023, and the second session of this dialogue took place in March 2024. In this dialogue, the two sides discussed their collaboration in international fora, and also exchanged views on the promotion of an inclusive society and women's empowerment, as well as the improvement of democratic resilience in the international community and within each country.

(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. Japan has served as a member of the Council for five terms until 2023. Most recently, it was elected in the election of the Human Rights Council members held in October 2023 and serves on the Council for the term from January 2024 to December 2026 (sixth term).

At the high-level segment of the 55th Session of the Human Rights Council held in February and March (a meeting of the key representatives from each country), Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs FUKAZAWA Yoichi delivered a statement. He stressed that it was important for the international community to continue dialogue and cooperation amid the increasingly dire circumstances facing many people in countries across the globe, including in Ukraine and the Middle East including the Gaza Strip. 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

the situation in Hong Kong and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and urged China to take concrete actions. He also introduced Japan's latest initiatives, including the promotion of respect for human rights in corporate activities under its National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, and initiatives on gender issues led by Japan as Chair of the G7. 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 17 consecutive years). This resolution strongly demands again that North Korea sincerely listen to 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 in particular, realize the immediate return of all Japanese abductees.

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 79th session of the General Assembly, 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 a session of the Third Committee in November and at a plenary session of the UN General Assembly in December (adopted for the 20th consecutive year). The resolution reiterated the urgency and importance of the abductions issue, which involves a serious violation of human rights, and of the immediate return of all abductees, as they and their family members are ageing and there is no time to lose, and also strongly demands again 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, in particular, realize the immediate return of all Japanese abductees. At the same session, Australia, on behalf of 15 countries, delivered a joint statement expressing concern about the human rights situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and serious concern about credible reports detailing human rights abuses in Tibet. 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. These include the Government of Japan’s formulation of the NAP on Business and Human Rights in 2020 and the cross-industry Guidelines on Respecting Human Rights in Responsible Supply Chains in 2022, as well as its decision on a government policy on human rights consideration in public procurement in April 2023. At the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Policy Promotion for the Implementation of Japan’s National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights held in May 2024, a decision was made to commence work on revising the NAP with the approaching deadline in FY2025, and revision work is currently ongoing (as of the end of 2024). Furthermore, MOFA carries out publicity and promotional activities through seminars targeting companies in Japan and overseas, and cooperates with international organizations, mainly in countries where Japanese enterprises are operating, to provide support to local governments on the formulation and implementation of National Action Plans, to conduct training for Japanese companies and their suppliers in these countries. MOFA, in cooperation

with the relevant ministries and agencies, will steadily implement the NAP and revise it going forward, while continuing to engage in dialogues with stakeholders.

D Summit for Democracy

In March, the Republic of Korea hosted the third Summit for Democracy, and Prime Minister Kishida participated in the Leaders’ Plenary held in online format. Prime Minister Kishida explained Japan’s stance and initiatives to protect democracy and promote human rights in the world, from the standpoint of emphasizing universal values, including democracy.

E 1st Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children, held in Colombia

In November, the 1st Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children was held in Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, in which Japan participated. In addition to explaining Japan’s initiatives toward eradicating abuse and sexual violence against children, Japan endorsed the Bogotá Call to Action, which was adopted as the outcome document of the conference.

(2) Initiatives Concerning International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

A International Human Rights Law (IHRL)

In June, the election of the members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was held at the 17th Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the UN Headquarters in New York, and Japan’s candidate, TAMON Hiroshi, was elected. He is the second member from Japan elected to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, following former member ISHIKAWA Jun (term of office from 2017 to 2020).

B International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

Japan has actively been engaged in efforts to strengthen the national implementation of IHL. In September, a meeting of the National IHL Committee was held jointly with the Japanese Red Cross Society. Japan participated in the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent held in October, where

it delivered a statement and made a joint pledge with the Japanese Red Cross Society regarding the importance of strengthening the promotion of IHL. As part of its efforts to raise awareness of IHL, Japan, as it does every year, dispatched its officials to serve as judges in the IHL Moot Court and Role-Play Competitions in December, organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

(3) Contribution to Refugee Issues

From the perspective of international contribution and humanitarian aid, Japan became the first country in Asia to accept refugees in 2010 under a resettlement program (the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to a third country that agrees to accept them for long-term settlement). Japan has been accepting

refugees from Thailand until 2014 and from Malaysia since 2015. As of the end of 2024, a total of 323 refugees from 133 households have arrived in Japan.

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.

8 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which has been ongoing since 2022, as well as the situation in the Gaza Strip since October 2023, have seriously affected women and girls in particular, 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 health-care, 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 adapt 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 2024, which serves as the basis for Japan's budget, covered WPS for the second consecutive year since 2023. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) established a task force in January under the Minister for Foreign Affairs in January 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 Apulia G7 Leaders' Communique issued at the G7 Apulia Summit held in June 2024 reaffirmed commitment to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity, through full, equal, and meaningful participation in all spheres of society. It also set out the recommitment to preventing and addressing hate and discrimination, and to eliminating sexual and gender-based violence, including that facilitated by technology and trafficking

in persons. Furthermore, the leaders reiterated their commitment in the Hiroshima Leaders' Communiqué to universal access to adequate, affordable, and quality health services for women, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, and to collectively increase ODA for gender equality. In October, the Ministerial Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment was held in Matera.

(2) G20

The Empowerment of Women Working Group (EWWG) was convened for the first time after the decision to launch the Working Group was made under India's G20 Presidency in 2023. The Chair's Statement on the G20 Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women Ministerial Meeting, held in Brasilia in October, reflected the concept of WPS by recognizing the role of women as agents of peace. Furthermore, the Leaders' Declaration issued at the G20 Rio de Janeiro Summit in November recognized that the participation and leadership of women in all sectors and at all levels of the economy is crucial to the growth of global GDP, condemned every form of discrimination against women and girls, and confirmed the commitment to end gender-based violence including sexual violence, and combat misogyny online and offline. It also declared the leaders' commitment to implementing the G20 Roadmap Towards and Beyond the Brisbane Goal, formulated in 2021, and expressed that they look forward to developing proposals with a view to establishing new G20 commitments for the post-2025 period, in particular regarding closing the gender pay gap.

(3) International Cooperation for the Empowerment of Women in Developing Countries

Through the 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.

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. Consistent with the concept of "investment in people" described in Japan's Development Cooperation Charter (Cabinet decision in 2023), Japan will continue to promote cooperation on efforts in the education sector while also taking into consideration the perspectives of providing quality education, building capacity for women, children, and youths, and securing educational opportunities under situations of conflict and disaster.

B Supporting Women Through JICA

To promote the economic empowerment of women, Japan has conducted training in Japan based on the theme of promoting business and entrepreneurship among women, attended by participants from nine countries in Africa. It has also provided support for promoting entrepreneurship and business among women in Sri Lanka. 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 Kenya and Pakistan, Japan has conducted training with participants from 14 countries on the themes of cooperation aimed at protecting the survivors of gender-based violence and supporting them to gain independence, and 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 2024, Japan provided financial support of approximately 0.66 million U.S. dollars to the OSRSG-SVC, providing various services including access to health-care and justice to victims, improving livelihoods, and providing training on prevention in the regions, with the aim of protecting refugees and internally displaced women in Sudan from sexual and gender-based violence, as well as preventing such violence. In the same year, Japan contributed an additional 2 million Euros to the Global Survivors Fund (GSF), founded by 2018 Nobel Peace Prize laureates Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad, bringing Japan's total contributions to 10 million Euros by 2024 (as of December 31, 2024). As a member of the board, Japan is also actively involved in the management of GSF. 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 and conflict prevention to peace processes and post-conflict peacebuilding. It was first stipulated in the UN Security Council resolution 1325 adopted in 2000.

Since assuming her position, Foreign Minister Kamikawa has taken a wide range of approaches to roll out initiatives for promoting WPS, and used various opportunities, including at bilateral and multilateral fora, to bring up WPS and call for cooperation with international efforts. In January, the cross-organizational Taskforce on WPS was established within MOFA, developing a cross-sectoral system to promote WPS. In

February, a WPS Session was convened as part of the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction. At this Session, Foreign Minister Kamikawa introduced Japan's WPS-related efforts in support of Ukraine, and engaged in discussions on WPS efforts and challenges in Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction from the perspectives of government, business, and civil society. Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Nigeria in April, where she attended an exchange of opinions and a working lunch on WPS. She exchanged views with senior officials including women from international organizations and internally displaced women, who are working at the forefront of peacebuilding in North-East Nigeria, and listened to explanations of WPS efforts by international organizations in North-East Nigeria and the positive impact that Japan's support has on improving the status of women. During the UN General Assembly High-level Week in September, Foreign Minister Kamikawa delivered a statement at the WPS Focal Points Network⁽⁴⁵⁾ High-Level Side Event, and announced that Japan, together with Norway, will be serving as co-chairs of the WPS Focal Point Network in 2025.

For Japan to elevate WPS to the next level, and from the perspective that it is important to listen to the opinions of experts on the frontlines and from different sectors, Foreign Minister Kamikawa launched the policy forum, "WPS+I (Women, Peace, and Security + Innovation) symposium," and in February, participated in an exchange of opinions in Rio de Janeiro with Erika Takimoto, Member of the State Assembly of Rio de Janeiro, Joyce Trindade, Director of the Women's Advancement Promotion Bureau of the City of Rio de Janeiro, Suzana Kahn, Dean of Engineering Department of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, and Silvana Nagai, judo instructor. In March, a meeting entitled "WPS + Innovation from the United Nations" was held in New York, where she engaged in a lively discussion with Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN Women, Ambassador Merete Brattested, Permanent Representative of Norway to the UN, NAKAMITSU Izumi, UN Under-Secretary-General

⁽⁴⁵⁾ WPS Focal Point Network is the largest WPS-related network among UN Member States, and lessons drawn as well as good practices are shared within the network. In addition to governments, regional organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the African Union (AU), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) also participate. As of December 2024, there are a total of 103 members, including 93 countries and 10 regional organizations.

and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and Ambassador Melanne Verwee, Executive Director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, on the progress regarding WPS in the Security Council and others in recent years, as well as the need to protect women in conflicts and greater participation by women in various fields. Similarly in March, during an exchange of views with 19 female Ambassadors to Japan held at the Embassy of Mexico in Tokyo, the Ambassadors made remarks on women's participation and gender policies including WPS in their countries, as well as their own experiences from a woman's perspective, and exchanged candid views on the possible manners of cooperation with Japan.

In line with 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) revised in 2023, Japan contributes to international organizations such as UN Women and OSRSG-SVC, and implements WPS projects in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.

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 million U.S. dollars (2024). In particular, for women and girls in developing countries, Japan is implementing projects related to WPS, such as capacity building to participate in the peacebuilding and reconstruction processes. It is also working on the 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 68th session of CSW (CSW68) convened in March was held as an in-person meeting following up from 2023. At the meeting, discussions were held on the priority theme of “accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.” Minister in Charge of Women's Empowerment and Minister of State for Gender Equality, KATO Ayuko, delivered a video message at the General Discussion on behalf of Japan. In her message, she explained Japan's complex and multifaceted approaches toward realizing gender equality in society, including economic independence for women. In addition, OSAKI Asako (Director of Gender Action Platform, a specified nonprofit corporation) delivered a statement at the Ministerial Roundtable on behalf of Japan. In her statement, she introduced Japan's initiatives, including domestic policies to promote the economic independence of women, and poverty reduction support implemented through international cooperation for women in and outside Japan.

D Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Since 1987, Japan has continued sending committee members to the CEDAW (comprising 23 members (individual capacity)). In October, a review was conducted in Geneva (Switzerland) on the Ninth Periodic Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (submitted in September 2021). The government delegation, consisting of representatives from the relevant ministries and agencies and headed by Director General Okada of the Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office, explained the status of implementation in each area since the Ninth Periodic Report.⁽⁴⁶⁾

⁽⁴⁶⁾ For Comments from Japan on the Concluding Observations on the ninth periodic report of Japan, see MOFA's website: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100773663.pdf>



Section 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 worsening situation in the Middle East, and global issues, 2024 was a year in which the importance of

Japan's development cooperation was reaffirmed as a way to address these issues. In Japan, various events were carried out to mark the 70th anniversary of Japan's launch of Official Development Assistance (ODA).⁽¹⁾

1 Development Cooperation

(1) Development Cooperation Charter and Japan's ODA Allocation

A Revision of the Development Cooperation Charter

In June 2023, the Cabinet decided on the revision of Development Cooperation Charter,⁽²⁾ showing a new direction for the country's development cooperation, in order to strengthen Japan's involvement in developing countries and more effectively and strategically utilize development cooperation as one of the most important tools for diplomacy. The revised Charter sets forth "co-creation" as one of its basic policies, which means involving various actors, including developing countries, to bring together the strengths of each for the creation of new solutions together. As one of its measures, the revised Charter also proposed Co-creation for common agenda initiative (which proposes attractive cooperation menus that leverage Japan's strengths and combine ODA, other official flows (OOF), and private sector funds in the areas that should be strategically addressed from a foreign policy perspective).

Specifically, at the Japan-Fiji Summit Meeting in July 2024, the two countries concurred on implementing Co-creation for common agenda initiative in the

areas of disaster prevention and climate change measures in Fiji, and at the Japan-Laos Summit Meeting in October, both countries shared the intention to consider utilizing Co-creation for common agenda initiative to strengthen electricity connectivity in Laos and its neighboring countries as well as promote decarbonization through clean energy.

In addition, in the current situation where the flow of private funding to developing regions far exceeds public funding, including ODA, there is an increasing need to maximize development impact through the mobilization of new resources. In response, in March 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) established the Advisory Panel on New Financing for Development to explore new measures for the mobilization of these resources. The Panel met a total of three times, and in July 2024, it presented a report to Foreign Minister Kamikawa entitled "Contributing to a Sustainable Future and Creating a Virtuous Cycle of Growth."

B Japan's ODA Allocation

Japan's total ODA in 2023 was approximately 19.6 billion U.S. dollars (+12.0% year on year),⁽³⁾ based on the

(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) For Japan's Development Cooperation Charter, see the MOFA website:
https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/page24e_000410.html

(3) 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.



Grant Equivalent System (GE system).⁽⁴⁾ Japan ranks third among the member of the OECD/DAC,⁽⁵⁾ following the United States (U.S.) and Germany. Japan's ODA as a percentage of GNI⁽⁶⁾ based on the GE system was 0.44%, placing Japan in 12th place among members of the OECD/DAC (Source: OECD Database (OECD. Data Explorer) (December 2024)).

(2) Development Cooperation in 2024

In 2024, Japan engaged mainly in the following (A to D below).

A Support for Ukraine, Assistance to the Palestinians, 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 more than 12.0 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, Foreign Minister Kamikawa, during her visit to Ukraine in January 2024, attended a ceremony for the transportation support of seven large transformers through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the provision of five gas turbine generators, including those manufactured by Japanese companies, through the UNDP and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Furthermore, when Foreign Minister Iwaya visited the country in November, he attended a ceremony for the delivery of one gas turbine, 15 variable frequency

drives for water pumping facilities, and two gas pistons through the UNDP, as well as 32 small-scale power generators through JICA. As part of assistance in mine action, training programs were held in August for staff members of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SESU) in Cambodia, where Japan has cooperated with demining for more than two decades. These programs covered the operation and maintenance of demining machines Japan provided to Ukraine.

Additionally, in response to the situation in Gaza triggered by the terrorist attacks against Israel by Hamas and others in October 2023, Japan provided assistance to Palestine totaling approximately 130 million U.S. dollars between October 2023 and November 2024, and decided to provide additional assistance totaling approximately 100 million U.S. dollars at the end of December 2024. In particular, in response to the Gaza crisis, Japan provided humanitarian assistance in the form of the provision of food, blankets, and medicines.

Regarding the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which plays an indispensable role in supporting Palestine refugees, Japan suspended its funding (approximately 35 million U.S. dollars) following allegations in January that its staff members were involved in the terror attack. In April 2024, however, Japan lifted the suspension of its funding. In disbursing the contribution, Japan reaffirmed with UNRWA, in order to ensure the appropriateness of the projects funded by Japan, establishing a "Japan-UNRWA Project Management and Monitoring Mechanism," promotion of the participation of women in leadership positions in UNRWA governance reform and other initiatives, and Japan taking all necessary measures in the event of misuse of funds by Japan.

Countries in the Global South, including Africa, face severe food insecurity and shortages due to rising inflation and supply chain disruptions, partly influenced by Russia's aggression against Ukraine, along

(4) Grant Equivalent System (GE system) was introduced by the OECD/DAC in 2018 as the standard method for calculating ODA loans. Accordingly, government loans entering the calculation of the ODA grant equivalent measure are referred to as ODA flows. The GE system records the amount of government loans by reflecting the financial 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, while, the amount repaid is counted as negative) that was previously the standard method used by the OECD/DAC, the GE system measures Japan's actual government loans more accurately. (<https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/white/2019/html/topics/01.html>)

(5) OECD/DAC: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development /Development Assistance Committee

(6) GNI: Gross National Income



with worsening humanitarian crises. In response, Japan has provided food assistance and support for strengthening production capacity through bilateral channels, international organizations and Japanese non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to address global food security.

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.

In addition, with regard to the G7 Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), an initiative to promote quality infrastructure investment

launched at the G7 Elmau Summit in 2022, side events were held at the G7 Hiroshima Summit in 2023 and the G7 Apulia Summit in June 2024, which involved not only the G7 but also private sector participation. The G7 countries introduced efforts to strengthen connectivity in Africa and expressed their hope that infrastructure investment, including private finance, will be promoted under PGII. Prime Minister Kishida introduced Japan's efforts to enhance connectivity in Africa and Asia and stated that the results of PGII will be incorporated into the 9th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 9), scheduled to be held in the summer of 2025.

C Addressing Global Issues

Japan is working to resolve global issues, including the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These efforts are taking place in line with the country's Development Cooperation Charter, which positions the concept of “human security in the new era”⁽⁷⁾ as its guiding principle and under the revised SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles of December 2023.⁽⁸⁾ 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. Furthermore, as humanitarian crises become more protracted and diversified, Japan will promote humanitarian assistance, including support for refugees and displaced persons, poverty reduction, economic and social development, and peace-building and nation-building, based on the concept of the “Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDP Nexus)” which aims to provide not only humanitarian and development assistance but also support for sustaining peace, through addressing the root causes of conflict.

(7) Human security: An approach that focuses on freedom from fear and deprivation through the protection and empowerment of individuals, as well as the right of each person to live with happiness and dignity.

(8) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Implementation Guiding Principles (December 19, 2023; SDGs Promotion Headquarters)
https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/sdgs/pdf/kaitei_2023_en.pdf

(8)



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 fundings from the private sector, as laid out in the revised 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. In addition, to encourage the overseas expansion of Japanese companies, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and startups. Japan will support the identification of needs and the formulation of business models in developing countries through JICA's private sector partnership projects, thereby promoting the resolution of challenges in developing countries through the overseas expansion of Japanese companies.

(3) Initiatives in Major Regions

A East and Southeast Asia

The peace, stability, and prosperity of the East and Southeast Asia regions are directly linked to Japan's national security and economic development and are therefore vital to Japan. 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



Construction site of the Metro Manila Subway Project, a loan aid project in the Philippines (May, Manila, Philippines)

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. The “Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Connectivity Initiative,” announced in September 2023 seeks to further promote efforts to strengthen connectivity on both the structural and non-structural fronts. For example, the Initiative promotes support for strengthening connectivity through physical infrastructure projects such as the development of passenger railways in Metropolitan Manila Area (the Philippines) and the improvement of Vientiane International Airport (Laos), as well as non-structural support through the ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Capacity Building Centre (AJCCBC).

Furthermore, a wide range of concrete cooperation is being promoted in light of the “Joint Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation” and its implementation plan adopted at the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation in December 2023. For example, as a new public-private partnership initiative to solve issues through co-creation, cooperation in the digital field is being accelerated in collaboration with various actors, including private companies, with regard to “Co-creation for common agenda initiative,” which was agreed upon with Cambodia in December 2023. This includes the establishment of a public-private roundtable meeting in March 2024.

Japan is actively providing support for capacity building for maritime law enforcement to countries



Measurement of plastic waste using drones in the technical cooperation project for Thailand called Formation of a Center of Excellence for Marine Plastic Pollution Studies in the Southeast Asian Seas (December, Chonburi, Thailand; Photo: JICA)

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 2024, training was provided on topics such as measures against marine plastic waste, public international law, food value chain development, customs administration, and infectious disease control. 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 regard 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 is a strategically important region situated as a marine transportation hub that connects East Asia with the Middle East. It also offers immense economic potential, with high economic growth and

large-scale infrastructure demand expected. As a result, the region is attracting attention from Japanese companies as an important market, production base, and investment destination. On the other hand, parts of the region face many challenges such as serious poverty, undeveloped basic social infrastructure, such as education and healthcare, measures against frequently occurring natural disasters, and delays in the development of industrial infrastructure. Japan provides assistance for resolving these challenges through ODA, which includes human security, achievement of the SDGs, and fostering the investment environment for Japanese companies.

Development cooperation with India, which has achieved remarkable economic growth in recent years, represents an important component of the "Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership." Japan is promoting development cooperation that benefits both Japan and India by bringing together the strengths of both countries to solve social issues through the co-creation of new value. From the perspective of addressing global issues as well, Japan supports the realization of inclusive and sustainable economic growth in India, considering that the country has a large population and still faces a great need for economic and social development.

In addition to supporting entrepreneurs along with micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises with the aim of strengthening industrial development through co-creation, Japan provided support for the construction of roads, bridges, and other infrastructure to strengthen multi-layered connectivity, the construction of medical university hospitals that will contribute to clean economic and social development, the development of urban water supply systems, and forest and biodiversity conservation in 2024.

The relationship between Japan and Bangladesh was elevated to a "Strategic Partnership" in 2023, and Japan continues to provide support for improving connectivity within and around the country, infrastructure development, and the investment environment, aiming for Bangladesh to move on from the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in 2026, under both initiatives of the "Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt (BIG-B)" and the "Industrial Value Chain" concept that connects the Bay of Bengal to the North Eastern Region of India based on the new FOIP plan. Japan



Opening ceremony for the main shaft of the Nagdhunga Tunnel (April 15, Kathmandu outskirts, Nepal; Photo: JICA)

has also maintained its long-standing support in the areas of education and health, and is also assisting in resolving issues that require immediate action, such as rapid urbanization and climate change. Moreover, Japan continues to provide humanitarian assistance in cooperation with the Government of Bangladesh and international organizations to the large number of displaced persons who have come to Bangladesh from Myanmar since 2017 and who remain in the country.

In Sri Lanka, the humanitarian situation has worsened due to an economic crisis, including a shortage of imported materials due to an acute shortage of foreign currency, since the temporary suspension of all payments on the country's foreign debt payments in April 2022. As co-chair of the Official Creditor Committee (OCC), Japan has led Sri Lanka's debt restructuring process, and in July 2024, the members of the OCC and Sri Lanka signed a Memorandum of Understanding on debt restructuring. Additionally, as the intention of the Government of Sri Lanka to quickly conclude a bilateral agreement between Japan and Sri Lanka was confirmed in writing, Japan decided to resume the disbursement of yen loans, etc. Japan continues to provide support to Sri Lanka for environmental measures, such as a grant aid of 300 million Japanese yen for the provision of waste treatment equipment, and for the development of infrastructure for economic growth, and others.

In Pakistan, Japan approved cooperation in areas such as the recovery of Maternal and Child health care equipment for the affected areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (1.503 billion Japanese yen) and strengthening flood protection and dike improvement in the Indus River (2.831 billion Japanese yen), with



The Project for Development Support of Electronic Navigational Charts for Honiara and Noro Ports in Solomon Islands aimed at improving the safety and efficiency of maritime transport (October, Solomon Islands; Photo: JICA)

a focus on continuing to support recovery and reconstruction efforts following the major floods in 2022.

In Nepal, cooperation focused on natural disaster measures and the development of transportation infrastructure, etc. In particular, Japan provided a yen loan of 16.636 billion Japanese yen, contributing to the opening of the Nagdhunga Tunnel, the country's first mountain road tunnel.

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), 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.

The 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM10) held in July was attended by leaders and representatives of 19 countries and regions, as well as the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). At the



A route bus currently in trial operation as part of the Project for Establishing an Eco-Friendly Transportation System, a technical cooperation project with Palau (September, Babeldaob Island, Palau; Photo: JICA)

meeting, participants adopted the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM10) Japan-Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Declaration and the PALM10 Joint Action Plan. In its 2050 Strategy, the PIF has set out seven priority areas: (a) political leadership and regionalism, (b) people-centered development, (c) peace and security, (d) resources and economic development, (e) climate change and disasters, (f) ocean and environment, and (g) technology and connectivity. The Joint Action Plan also positions these seven areas as key areas for cooperation. Furthermore, at PALM10, in response to climate change, which is the "single greatest existential threat" to the Pacific Island countries, Prime Minister Kishida announced the "Pacific Climate Resilience Initiative," an initiative that mobilizes all of the country's technologies, know-how, and funds by a concerted national effort and is comprised of three pillars: (a) strengthening disaster risk reduction and response capacity, (b) promoting decarbonization, and (c) supporting Pacific-led efforts. For example, in the area of infrastructure development, Japan announced support for the replacement of the Minato Bridge in Palau and the construction of an international airport passenger terminal in the Marshall Islands; while in the maritime area, Japan announced support for patrol boats for Nauru and the provision of a fishery research vessel to the Federated States of Micronesia, and the development of a fisheries industry research center at the national university in the Solomon Islands; and in the area of climate change, Japan announced support for a stand-by disaster recovery loan to Fiji.

The Government of Japan has also decided to implement the Project for Human Resource Development

Scholarship (JDS), a grant aid program to train young government officials through studying at Japanese higher education institutions, in some Pacific Island countries. Furthermore, in collaboration with the U.S. and other countries, Japan is strengthening cooperation in new fields that contribute to economic security, such as cooperation related to submarine cables.

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 the area of health and medical care, Japan decided to provide Paraguay with grant aid worth approximately 500 million Japanese yen for medical equipment at public medical institutions, including the



Field examination of landmine removal methods in Colombia (August, Bolivar Department, Colombia; Photo: JICA)

Maternal and Child Health Center at the Asuncion University Hospital, which had been constructed with ODA in the past, and to improve access to health care for low-income groups, particularly mothers and children. In addition, as emergency humanitarian assistance in the event of a natural disaster, Japan provided emergency relief goods through JICA to Brazil, which was hit by torrential rains.

In the climate change/environment sector, the Government of Japan has decided to provide the Dominican Republic with a yen loan of up to 6.66 billion Japanese yen for the Integrated Solid Waste Management Improvement Project, which seeks to improve waste management through on-site improvements and technical assistance at the Duquesa disposal site, the only final waste disposal site in the northwestern part of the capital, Santo Domingo. The Government of Japan has also provided approximately 1.33 billion Japanese yen through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to support the strengthening of protection for refugees and migrants and their resettlement in Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, and Peru, which are accepting large numbers of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, as well as to support their humanitarian assistance and socio-economic inclusion.

In addition, in response to the frequent occurrence of violence and human rights violations by gangs in Haiti, which has led to a rapid deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation, Japan is providing support focused on both security and humanitarian assistance to contribute to the stabilization of the situation in Haiti. In October, Japan decided to provide grant aid of approximately 400 million Japanese yen through UN Women to protect and support women who have become victims of gender-based violence, to take preventive measures, and to promote the empowerment of women.

Japan also has entered into partnership programs with Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and Chile to promote human resources development in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and other regions, through triangular cooperation⁽⁹⁾ in areas such as 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 of this region are also important for the development, stability, and connectivity of the whole Eurasia, including Japan. Cooperation with this region, which continues to see high growth and a rising population, is becoming increasingly important from the perspective of maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law amid a rapidly changing international environment.

In terms of strengthening connectivity, Japan is working to develop the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor (TCTC). For example, in 2024, in cooperation with the World Customs Organization (WCO), which works on international cooperation in the area of customs, Japan began cooperation to improve the efficiency of customs clearance for customs officials in the region.

Additionally, through the grant aid project JDS, Japan is contributing to the development of government officials who are expected to demonstrate leadership in policymaking at the core of government in the future. In addition, in the area of economic and social infrastructure, Japan has decided to build a water distribution network to establish a safe and stable water supply service in Tajikistan, and to provide medical equipment to Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. Furthermore, Japan is providing support for strengthening border management capabilities in the Central Asian region that borders Afghanistan.



The Project for the Reconstruction of Urmalar River Bridge on Talas-Taraz Road (June, Talas Region, Kyrgyz Republic; Photo: JICA)

⁽⁹⁾ Triangular Cooperation refers to a form of development cooperation in which a developed country, a donor country or an international organization supports collaboration between developing countries by providing resources such as human resources, technology, funding, and knowledge.

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 Lebanon, in response to the rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation due to the large-scale air strikes by Israel since mid-September 2024, which have resulted in more than one million internally displaced persons, Japan has decided to provide the country with an additional 10 million U.S. dollars in emergency grant.

With regard to Syria, under its assistance policy of providing humanitarian assistance to all Syrian people facing difficulties, Japan has provided assistance totaling approximately 3.5 billion U.S. dollars to Syria and neighboring countries since 2012. In order to provide educational opportunities to Syrian youth who have been deprived of the opportunity to attend school, Japan has accepted 144 Syrian students since 2017. Furthermore, in response to the influx of many refugees from Lebanon into Syria since mid-September 2024 due to the worsening situation in Lebanon, Japan has decided to provide an additional 10 million U.S. dollars in emergency grant.

In Yemen, where a severe humanitarian crisis is still ongoing, Japan has provided more than 400 million U.S. dollars in support since 2015. In 2024, Japan, in cooperation with international organizations, provided humanitarian assistance in particularly high demand areas of food, health care, and refugee assistance. Japan also provided cooperation such as renovating workshops at the Port of Aden, providing mooring vessels, and in human resources development through JICA training from a medium- to long-term perspective.

In Afghanistan, in light of the serious humanitarian crisis since the Taliban took over Kabul in August 2021, Japan has been providing humanitarian support in areas such as health care, education, and food, including support for basic humanitarian needs, while collaborating with international organizations. In response to the flood damage in northern Afghanistan in May 2024, Japan provided emergency relief goods

such as tents and blankets through JICA, and provided emergency grant of 3 million U.S. dollars in areas such as food and health through international organizations.

Human resource development is vital to realize stability in the Middle East in the mid- to long-term. As an example, in Egypt, under the initiative of President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi, Japanese-style education has been introduced at the Egypt-Japan School (EJS) and the Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology (E-JUST), and efforts are also being made to cooperate in the areas of future education and human resource development, from preschool education to graduate school. Furthermore, when Minister of Planning, Economic Development and International Cooperation of Egypt Rania A. Al-Mashat visited Japan in December, three Exchanges of Notes were signed with State Minister for Foreign Affairs FUJII Hisayuki regarding a yen loan of up to 35 billion Japanese yen to support private sector development and economic diversification, a grant aid of 500 million Japanese yen to provide equipment related to the digitalization of the agricultural machinery loan centers, and a grant aid of 180 million Japanese yen to provide equipment at the National Cultural Center. In light of international developments such as the worsening situation in Gaza, Egypt's importance in maintaining peace and stability in the entire Middle East region is increasing, and it is expected that comprehensive cooperation between the two countries will be further strengthened under the Japan-Egypt strategic partnership.

In regard to Türkiye, the Government of Japan decided to provide a total of 80 billion Japanese yen in yen loans, including 20 billion Japanese yen in December 2023 as emergency support for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises affected by the earthquake that struck southeastern Türkiye in February 2023, and 60 billion Japanese yen in April 2024 to support the rehabilitation and reconstruction of infrastructure in the affected areas.

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, Foreign Minister Kamikawa visited Madagascar and agreed to strengthen connectivity through the Toamasina Port Development Project and to work on the multifaceted development of Madagascar by utilizing Co-creation for common agenda initiative. Later, during a visit to Côte d'Ivoire, Foreign Minister Kamikawa confirmed the strengthening of cooperative relations with the country by attending the launch ceremony for a cooperation project with UN Women and visiting the Centre Hospitalier & Universitaire de Cocody, where Japan has provided support for construction and renovation. During the minister's next visit to Nigeria, she toured Ventures Park, startup accelerator hub, as well as held talks with internationally displaced women, and expressed her determination to continue supporting efforts to stabilize northeastern Nigeria, while also taking into account the perspective of Women, Peace and Security (WPS). In August, the TICAD Ministerial Meeting was held in Tokyo and attended by representatives of 47 African countries, as well as international organizations, private companies, members of Japan's Diet, and civil society groups. At the meeting, under the theme of "Co-create innovative solutions with Africa" and with a view toward TICAD 9 in 2025, discussions were held on the three pillars of society, peace and stability, and economy, with an awareness of the three perspectives of future-oriented problem-solving, youth and women, and connectivity and knowledge platform. 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.

(4) Approaches to Appropriate and Effective Implementation of ODA

A Approaches to Appropriate Implementation of ODA

In order to secure transparency and improve planning of ODA projects, MOFA listens to the views of external experts at each phase and formulates projects based on these opinions. In the planning phase of project candidates, 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 (5,405 projects published as of the end of December 2024) on the "ODA Mieru-ka Site" after the implementation 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 (internal evaluations for projects valued between 200 million and 1.0 billion Japanese yen and third-party evaluations for projects valued at over 1.0 billion Japanese yen) on projects implemented by MOFA to improve ODA management and ensure accountability. The suggestions and lessons drawn from the evaluation are utilized for the policy formation and project implementation of future ODA. MOFA also publishes the evaluation results on its website to ensure transparency.

Furthermore, from the perspective of ensuring the safety of personnel involved in development cooperation, MOFA and JICA are working to implement the safety measures formulated in the Final Report of the Council on Safety Measures for International Cooperation Projects (released in August 2016) and are continuing and strengthening efforts to ensure the effectiveness of safety measures for personnel involved in international cooperation projects.

B Approaches to Effective Implementation of ODA

In order to promote the formulation of ODA projects that can produce high project effects, MOFA formulates country-specific development cooperation

policies that set out priority areas and policies for each ODA project target country, while comprehensively examining the key policies of Japan's Development Cooperation Charter and the priorities of issues and development plans of the developing countries themselves. Moreover, the Rolling Plan is formulated as an appendix to the Country Development Cooperation Policy that lists projects at various stages from implementation decision to completion, visualizing where individual projects are positioned within the policy and how they correlate with other projects. Through these efforts, the limited ODA budget is strategically allocated to projects that are important to both Japan and recipient countries, and multiple projects are implemented in an organically linked manner to increase effectiveness.

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 private finance mobilization with ODA as a catalyst, and assistance for climate change related issues, etc. 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 Initiatives to Foster Understanding and Support of ODA

It is vital to have the understanding and support of the people when implementing development cooperation. To that end, MOFA makes efforts 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 also created First Step 3, a television drama series set on the frontline of international cooperation, as a new venture. Furthermore, various commemorative events were held in 2024, marking the 70th anniversary of Japan's ODA. MOFA,



State Minister for Foreign Affairs MIYAJI Takuma reading the keynote speech on behalf of Foreign Minister Iwaya at the Symposium to Commemorate the 70th Anniversary of Japan's Official Development Assistance (December 17, Tokyo)



First Step 3: Sekai wo Tsunagu Heiwa e no Negai, Television drama now available (as of February 2025)

in collaboration with relevant organizations such as JICA, held the Kick-off Event for the 70th anniversary of international cooperation in Kobe in March, the International Cooperation MIRAI Conference in May and the Symposium to Commemorate the 70th Anniversary of Japan's Official Development Assistance in December. Additionally, the 33rd Global Festa JAPAN 2024 (September) was held in a hybrid format that combined in-person events and online streaming, attracting 74,000 visitors and viewers over two days. MOFA has continued to dispatch ministry officials to educational organizations in actively conducting "ODA Delivery Lectures" for youth 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

SPECIAL
FEATURE

70 Years of International Cooperation and New ODA

With the year 2024 marking the 70th anniversary of Japan's launch of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 1954, various commemorative events were held throughout the year to raise awareness of international cooperation. Following the Kick-off Event for the 70th anniversary of international cooperation in Kobe in March, the International Cooperation MIRAI Conference took place in May and the Global Festa Japan 2024 in September. In December, as the finale of the 70th anniversary commemorative events, the Symposium to Commemorate the 70th Anniversary of Japan's Official Development Assistance was held using a hybrid format, both in person and online. Each of the events was attended by many people.

Furthermore, in order to consider new ODA measures, the Advisory Panel on New Financing for Development was launched under Foreign Minister Kamikawa, holding discussions while obtaining the opinions of various relevant actors within Japan.

■ Symposium to Commemorate the 70th Anniversary of Japan's Official Development Assistance

The symposium, with the theme “Co-Creation, Solidarity, and the Future: Toward a Free and Open International Order and a New Era of Development Cooperation,” opened with a speech by OBUCHI Yuko, a member of the House of Representatives and President of the JICA Parliamentary Union. This was then followed by keynote speeches from Foreign Minister Iwaya (read by State Minister for Foreign Affairs MIYAJI Takuma on his behalf) and Administrator for UNDP Achim Steiner. Thereafter, a panel discussion was held, attended by important figures and experts from Japan and abroad as well as international organizations. Attendees included Minister of Planning, Economic Development, and International Cooperation of Egypt Rania A. Al-Mashat, Vice Minister of Planning and Investment of Laos Phonevanh Outhavong, Secretary, Economic and Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Maldives Hussain Niyaz, Ambassador of Senegal to Japan Jean Antoine Diouf, and Ambassador of Tunisia to Japan Ahmed Chafra. In the first part, participants discussed an evaluation of Japan's 70 years of international cooperation, challenges the countries and international organizations are facing in light of global issues and changing international circumstances, the future potential of Japan's international cooperation, and expectations and hopes for the global situation in the future. In the second part of the session, under the theme of “New Approaches to International Cooperation,” the participants discussed new forms of international cooperation, including the significance and potential of international cooperation in solving common social challenges in international society and in Japan. The symposium concluded with closing remarks by Administrator for UNDP Steiner. This symposium serves as the finale of the series of events to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) held throughout the year.



Panel discussion at the Symposium to Commemorate the 70th Anniversary of Japan's Official Development Assistance (December 17, United Nations University, Tokyo)

■ Advisory Panel on New Financing for Development

The recommendations submitted by the Panel expressed the view that as Japan and developing countries work together to address diversifying social issues, it is becoming increasingly important to collaborate with various stakeholders, such as private companies, that have the ability to solve these problems. In order to increase collaboration, the recommendations found that it is important to create an ecosystem in which ODA serves as a catalyst, allowing private companies and investors to make investments based on economic rationality, ultimately leading to development in developing countries. As a measure to achieve this, it was stated that strengthening collaboration between ODA and “sustainable finance,” a financial mechanism for realizing a sustainable society, is important. In addition, the recommendations also emphasized the importance of sharing the experience of former JICA Overseas Cooperation Volunteers with the Japanese economy and society through post-return support, etc. Going forward, Japan will review its ODA mechanisms based on these recommendations and aim to realize a “new international cooperation” system that responds to recent changes in the environment.

1 For details, see the report of the Expert Panel on Sustainable Finance established by the Financial Services Agency.
https://www.fsa.go.jp/en/refer/councils/sustainable_finance/index.html





Main visual for the events to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of Japan's Official Development Assistance

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.



Logo of the events to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of Japan's Official Development Assistance

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 2015 and sets out the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for realizing a society under the principle of “Leave No One Behind.” Japan is promoting initiatives for achievement of the SDGs, having established 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. Additionally, Japan 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 to exchange views on the promotion of the SDGs. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, through the process of various initiatives and rule-making efforts by diverse stakeholders both at home and abroad, the nature of economic and social activities in the international community as a whole, including Japan, has undergone rapid and significant transformation, from people's awareness and lifestyles to industrial structures and financial flows.

On the other hand, the international community faces serious global issues such as climate change and infectious diseases, as well as complex crises that were

not anticipated at the time the SDGs were adopted. As a result, progress towards achieving the SDGs by 2030 is facing significant difficulties.

The SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles, revised by the SDGs Promotion Headquarters in December 2023, stated that amid accelerating population decline and an aging society, efforts toward achieving the SDGs will be strengthened and accelerated in order to build a diverse and inclusive society and realize Japan's sustainable development, prosperity, and enhanced international competitiveness through the resolution of social issues using innovation. In addition, they also present guidelines for further contributing in the most effective manner to the efforts of the international community towards achieving the SDGs, and efforts have been made to strengthen the implementation structure and cooperation among stakeholders. In April 2024, under the leadership of Foreign Minister Kamikawa, the Advisory Panel on Sustainability of the International Community was launched to consider approaches to simultaneously achieve growth and sustainability, with an eye toward the period beyond 2030, the deadline for the SDGs.

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 2023, Japan positioned human security as a guiding principle that underlies all of its development cooperation. In regard to bilateral cooperation, too, Japan has also put effort into the dissemination and implementation of this concept through support including Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects.

Japan has also led discussions at the UN, and had contributed a cumulative total of approximately 51.9 billion Japanese yen by the end of 2024 to the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, which was established at the UN in 1999 under Japan's leadership, to support the dissemination and implementation of human security by UN agencies. The 2030 Agenda, which advocates the principle of "Leave No One Behind," also places the concept of human security at its core. Additionally, in response to Japan's efforts, the UN Secretary-General's report on human security was published in January 2024, the first one in 10 years. The report points out that human security has not only been a concept but has also functioned as a useful tool in practice, and that an approach based on human security is becoming increasingly important. It emphasizes that human security is a tool that enhances solidarity between nations, between people, and between humans and the planet, based on the premise that each country takes ownership of the survival, livelihood, and dignity of its own people. Furthermore, an informal plenary meeting of the General Assembly on human security was held in April attended by UN Secretary-General António Guterres and President of the 78th Session of the General Assembly Dennis Francis. At the Summit of the Future held at the UN in September, Prime Minister Kishida stated that Japan would make bold efforts to "invest in people" under the concept of human security, and Japan will continue to work to promote and put into practice the concept of human security.

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. Leveraging the Japanese

knowledge of disaster risk reduction accumulated through numerous experiences with disasters, Japan has actively promoted international cooperation in various fields of disaster risk reduction, including, leading the adaptation of the "Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030," at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture in 2015. At the 2024 Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, Japan stated that it prioritizes strengthening disaster response, promoting investment in disaster risk reduction, and developing early warning systems. It also stressed the need to further promote international cooperation in disaster risk reduction.

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 hosted the High School Students Summit on "World Tsunami Awareness Day" (November 5) on October 23 and 24, 2024, in Kumamoto. At the opening ceremony, Minister of State for Disaster Management SAKAI Manabu delivered a speech, and for the closing ceremony, Prime Minister Ishiba sent a video message. Additionally, at the event for World Tsunami Awareness Day on November 5 at the UN Headquarters, the high school students who chaired the High School Students Summit and others gave a presentation about the summit, and Foreign Minister Iwaya sent a video message. Furthermore, in October, the 5th World Tsunami Museum Conference was held in the Philippines, where three high school students from Sendai took to the stage to give a presentation on their project to create a guidebook compiling museums related to disasters and disaster risk reduction in the Tohoku region.

Japan provides training on Tsunamis for women administrators and other officials in Asia and the Pacific in cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Hiroshima Office and supports the formulation of Tsunami evacuation plans and implementation of Tsunami evacuation drills for countries in the Asia-Pacific region with high risk of Tsunamis in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

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). In addition, the Development Cooperation Charter, which was revised in June 2023, clearly states that Japan will pursue quality education for all, empowerment of women, children and the youth, and ensuring educational opportunities in conflict and disaster situations. Taking this into consideration, in 2024 Japan made a new contribution to the Education Cannot Wait Fund, a global fund for education in crises, to enable Ukrainian children to learn in a safer environment.

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. Through assistance via international organizations, Japan has been addressing issues of deterioration within the food system due to the stagnation in distribution of agricultural products as a result of worldwide climate change and the situation in Ukraine.

In November, Prime Minister Ishiba attended the G20 Rio de Janeiro Summit, where he pointed out the importance of food security and building sustainable and resilient food systems. He also stated Japan will actively contribute to the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, which was established at the summit under the leadership of Brazil, the country's presidency, within the framework of the G20 and to which 80 countries, including all G20 members, have declared their intention to join, with the aim of stimulating joint actions to eradicate hunger and poverty around

the world. Prime Minister Ishiba also expressed Japan's intention to utilize its advanced technology to spread sustainable and highly productive agriculture, forestry, and fisheries industries to new partners, including countries in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as Africa.

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. In December 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted the International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development (2018-2028) to promote a shift in water management practices, and water-related initiatives are now considered important in the international community. At the Asia-Pacific Water Summit held in Kumamoto City in April 2022, Prime Minister Kishida announced the Kumamoto Initiative for Water, Japan's contribution initiative, which includes Japan's proactive efforts to resolve social issues related to water through cooperation and collaboration with other countries and international organizations. Furthermore, the Third High-Level International Conference on International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” was held in June 2024, and in her video message, Foreign Minister Kamikawa stated that Japan will promote various initiatives, including the aforementioned Kumamoto Initiative for Water. She also said that Japan will focus on vulnerable groups, such as women and children, youth, elderly, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples, and we will work together to achieve all goals and targets for water, toward the future we want, with no one left behind.

(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 COVID-19 pandemic 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)⁽¹⁰⁾ that is required in the post-COVID-19 era to ensure human security.

Japan continues to work closely with public-private partnerships and international organizations, such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Gavi (the Vaccine Alliance),⁽¹¹⁾ Unitaid, UHC2030,⁽¹²⁾ Global Health Innovative Technology Fund (GHIT), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), to address various global health issues. Furthermore, under the philosophy of breaking the cycle of “panic” and “forgetfulness” and leading the world to structural change in preparation for the next pandemic, Japan continues to work to raise international awareness and maintain momentum through various international conferences it hosts or participates in.

Specifically, based on the outcomes and follow-up of the G7 Hiroshima Summit 2023, Japan continued to actively contribute to discussions on global health in 2024. The outcome documents of the G7 Apulia Summit in June included Japan's points of emphasis and areas it has emphasized at the G7 Hiroshima Summit and elsewhere, such as the achievement of UHC, equitable access to medical products and medical countermeasures (MCMs),⁽¹³⁾ the need to strengthen the GHA, and coordination between finance and health tracks. The outcome documents of the G20 Rio de Janeiro Summit in November also reiterate the central coordinating role of the World Health Organization (WHO)

in the GHA and included terms and sentences such as UHC and equitable access to MCMs.

Regarding equitable access to MCMs, the African Vaccine Manufacturing Accelerator (AVMA) was launched in June 2024 with the aim of establishing a sustainable vaccine manufacturing base in Africa and improving the resilience of vaccine supply. Japan attended the launch meeting and expressed its support.

During the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) Ministerial Meeting in August, two thematic events were held on “Global Health Financing to Achieve Universal Health Coverage in Africa” and “New Partnership for Health Equity in Africa: Accelerating universal health coverage (UHC) with Innovations toward 2030.” Representatives from African countries and public-private partnership funds participated and engaged in lively discussions.

As in the previous year, many events related to global health were held during the High-Level UN General Assembly Week in September, one of which was the Ministerial Meeting of Foreign Ministry Channel (FMC) for Global Health Security. The framework, which was launched in March 2024 under the initiative of the U.S. as a successor to the COVID-19 Pandemic Global Prioritized Action Plan for Enhanced Engagement, a foreign ministerial framework for COVID-19 countermeasures, reflects the importance of cooperation and coordination between diplomatic authorities in discussions on international health security. In addition, a Political Declaration on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) was approved by consensus at the High-Level Meeting on AMR, and was subsequently adopted by the UN General Assembly in October.

A collective response of the international community is needed for global health crises such as COVID-19. Efforts have been undertaken to review and create international norms to strengthen pandemic PPR. In the 2021 to 2022 period, WHO Member States decided to hold discussions to amend the International Health Regulations (IHR) and to negotiate a new legal instrument on pandemic PPR (“Pandemic Agreement”). Subsequently, after more than two years of discussions

⁽¹⁰⁾ UHC: Universal Health Coverage; All people can receive basic health services when they need them at an affordable cost without financial hardship.

⁽¹¹⁾ Gavi (The Global Alliance for Vaccines): A public-private partnership to support immunization in developing countries.

⁽¹²⁾ An organization that works to promote UHC in the international community, with the aim of achieving UHC by 2030.

⁽¹³⁾ MCMs: medical countermeasures

and negotiations, amendments to the IHR were adopted by consensus at the World Health Assembly held in May/June 2024. A decision was also made to extend negotiations on the “Pandemic Agreement.” Japan believes that strengthening international norms is important to enhance pandemic PPR, and continues its constructive engagement in negotiations to improve international responses to infectious diseases.

(3) Labor and Employment

Promoting decent work is one of the goals in the 2030 Agenda (Goal 8: Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all), and achieving this is also positioned as a primary objective of the activities of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Through its voluntary funding contributions to the ILO, Japan actively provides support for improving occupational safety and health standards and establishing social insurance systems in developing countries, and is working to promote sustainable development in the area of labor. In January, Japan announced its participation in the initiative for the Global Coalition for Social Justice launched by the ILO, which aims to promote social justice and decent work for all, everywhere, through cooperation that transcends the frameworks of countries, regions, and international organizations, and is contributing to ensuring that the initiative produces concrete results.

(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. The sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, held in Nairobi, Kenya in February, addressed various environmental issues under the theme of “effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle

climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.” Japan co-sponsored a resolution on “Promoting synergies, cooperation or collaboration for national implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant environmental instruments” and led the discussions leading to its adoption. The fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was held in Antigua and Barbuda in May, where discussions were held on the sustainable development of SIDS. Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs HOSAKA Yasushi attended from Japan and introduced Japan's cooperation with SIDS. Furthermore, as one of the major donors to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) of the World Bank, which serves as a financial mechanism for major multilateral environmental agreements, Japan contributes to projects that address global environmental issues.

(A) Conservation of the Marine Environment

The problem of marine plastic litter, caused by illegal disposal and inappropriate waste management, is a pressing issue that can have a negative impact on marine ecology, tourism, fisheries, and human health. The importance of addressing the problem is growing in recent years. 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), to provide support for environmentally sound management and disposal of plastic waste, primarily in Asia, in the fields such as compiling scientific knowledge and building models necessary for measures against pollution by marine plastic litter. In response to the growing momentum for creating a new international framework to address plastic pollution including in the marine environment, at the resumed session of the Fifth United Nations Environment Assembly held in March 2022, it was decided to establish the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for the development of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, with the ambition of completing its work by the end of 2024. Japan actively participated in the series of INC sessions, including the fourth session held in Ottawa,

Canada in April 2024 and the fifth session held in Busan, ROK in November 2024, with the aim of formulating an effective and progressive treaty in which major plastic consuming and emitting countries participate. At the fifth session of the INC, there was some progress, such as the Chair presenting a new draft text, but differences in opinion among countries continued to exist on issues such as plastic production restrictions, and no substantial agreement was reached on the draft text. A resumed meeting will be held in the future to continue the negotiations, and Japan will continue to actively contribute to the discussions toward an early conclusion.

The High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy,⁽¹⁴⁾ which discusses issues such as marine environmental conservation, fisheries, and the use of marine resources, held its sixth summit in September. Discussions were held on the Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) to be held in June 2025, as well as the Panel's contribution to realizing a sustainable ocean economy beyond 2025. In his message, Prime Minister Kishida stated that as a maritime nation, Japan intends to actively participate in UNOC3, and that as a proponent of the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision, Japan will continue to actively participate in the negotiations to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution. He also cited blue carbon⁽¹⁵⁾ as an example of an area in which the Ocean Panel can contribute after 2025, and introduced Japan's efforts in this area.

(B) Conservation of Biodiversity

Japan is actively involved in international discussions on biodiversity conservation. At the 16th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP16) held in Cali, Colombia in October, Japan participated in discussions to decide on the outline of the multilateral mechanism for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of digital sequence information (DSI) on genetic resources, as well as the establishment of a subsidiary body for the

participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, and contributed to the adoption of these decisions. Japan also contributed to the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF), which operates under the GEF and aims to promote the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). The GBFF Council had approved 40 proposals by December of the same year.

In recent years, illegal wildlife trade has intensified, 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 CITES⁽¹⁶⁾ Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) Programme among others. In recent years, in addition to providing poaching monitoring facilities to Zambia and Rwanda in 2022, Japan has also decided to provide facilities related to wildlife poaching and conservation measures to Botswana in 2022 and to Zimbabwe in 2023. Japan has also been elected as a Standing Committee member representing the Asian region at the 19th Conference of the Parties to the CITES (COP19) held in 2022, and is actively contributing to international discussions during the COP sessions.

Japan also contributes to international rule-making for promoting conservation and sustainable uses of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. Through participation in the working group of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) held in April and September, Japan took part in discussions aimed at expanding the scope of genetic resources covered by the Multilateral System (MLS) and improving its functioning in order to promote access to genetic resources and their use in breeding and other areas.

With regard to efforts in the forestry area, through contributions to the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Japan continued to implement projects in producing countries in 2024 that contribute to the sustainable management of tropical forests and the promotion of sustainable and legal trade

⁽¹⁴⁾ A panel made up of leaders of major maritime nations co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Norway and the President of Palau. Since Japan was invited to join at the time of its establishment in 2018, successive Prime Ministers have served as members. The member countries (as of 2024) are Norway, Palau, Japan, Australia, Canada, Chile, Fiji, France, Ghana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico, Namibia, Portugal, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Seychelles, the UK, and the U.S.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Carbon that is absorbed by coastal and marine ecosystems through photosynthesis and then accumulates on the seafloor or in the deep sea (Source: Ministry of the Environment website)

⁽¹⁶⁾ CITES: Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

in tropical timber. In May, member countries voted to further extend the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA), the basis for the establishment of ITTO, until December 2029. In December, the 60th session of the International Tropical Timber Council was held in Yokohama, where discussions were held on negotiations for a new ITTA looking beyond 2030 as well as administrative and financial matters.

In December, the 16th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP16) was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where discussions were held on the establishment of a new framework for drought countermeasures. Japan actively participated in discussions in the Committee on Science and Technology, a subsidiary body of the Convention, as well as in discussions on land degradation countermeasures in the Convention's Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention.

(C) International Management of Chemicals and Hazardous Waste

From October to November, the 13th Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (COP13) and the 36th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (MOP36) were held jointly in Bangkok, Thailand, where discussions were held on the effective implementation of the Protocol, including strengthening atmospheric monitoring. Regarding the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, and the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, Japan is moving forward with preparations for the domestic implementation of the amendments to the Annexes adopted at the 2023 Joint BRS Conference of the Parties.

In terms of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, based on a decision made at the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2023, a working group was established to evaluate the effectiveness of measures under the Convention. This working group held a total of three meetings in 2024, with Japan contributing to the discussions as co-chair.

B Climate Change

(A) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement

Global efforts are essential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which are the cause of climate change. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, adopted in 1992, is an international framework for addressing climate change, and its ultimate objective is to achieve stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. The Kyoto 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 the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties (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 organizations, including Japan (as of December 2024).

(B) 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, and in April 2021, Japan announced that it aims to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 46% in fiscal year 2030 from its fiscal year 2013 levels. Furthermore, Japan announced to continue its strenuous efforts in its challenge to meet the lofty goal of cutting its emissions by 50%. Based on this, 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.

(C) 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC (COP29)

At COP29, held in Baku, Azerbaijan from November 11 to 24, the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG), a new goal for the period after 2025 which replaces the previous goal for developed countries to jointly mobilize 100 billion U.S. dollars per year, was discussed. As a result, the decision to set the goal of “at least 300 billion U.S. dollars per year by 2035” to support developing countries was adopted. It was also decided to call on all actors to work together to enable the scaling up of financing to developing country Parties for climate action from all public and private sources to at least 1.3 trillion U.S. dollars per year by 2035.

In addition, with regard to mitigation, efforts toward decarbonization of buildings and urban systems were discussed. Furthermore, detailed implementation rules for Article 6 of the Paris Agreement were adopted, which concerns international transfer of the amount of greenhouse gas emission reductions and removals, realizing the full operationalization of the Article.

(D) Providing Assistance to Developing Countries for Climate Action

Developed countries, including Japan, are providing various forms of assistance to developing countries, including financial support, capacity building, and technology transfer, so that developing countries can implement sufficient climate action.

At the G7 Cornwall Summit and the 26th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) in 2021, Japan announced that it would provide climate assistance in both private and public finance up to approximately 70 billion U.S. dollars over the five years from 2021 to 2025, and as part of this, it would double its assistance for adaptation, totaling approximately 14.8 billion U.S. dollars. Japan continues to steadily implement this assistance.

The Green Climate Fund (GCF), a multilateral fund that provides support for developing countries to address climate change, also plays an important

role in this assistance. Japan has contributed a total of approximately 319 billion Japanese yen to the fund to date, and in October 2023, Japan announced that it would contribute up to approximately 165 billion Japanese yen during the second replenishment period (2024 to 2027), which is the same amount as in the first replenishment.

In addition, the Global Shield Financing Facility (GSFF) was launched in 2022 as a multi-donor trust fund under the World Bank 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 685 million Japanese yen in March 2024.

At COP28, held in 2023, the basic institutional design of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) was decided so that particularly vulnerable developing countries address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change. Japan contributed 10 million U.S. dollars (1.37 billion Japanese yen) to the Fund in March 2024. FRLD's board held a total of four meetings between April and December, deciding that the Philippines would be the host country of the board, and making progress in selecting the Executive Director and in developing the legal arrangements for establishing the Fund's secretariat in the World Bank. As a member of the board, Japan is actively contributing to discussions aimed at the appropriate operationalization of the Fund.

(E) Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC) Platform⁽¹⁷⁾

In October, Japan took the opportunity of the ASEAN related Summit Meetings (Vientiane, Laos) to host the 2nd Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC) Leaders Meeting, where it reaffirm the importance of the AZEC principles, which consist of pursuing net-zero emissions through various pathways, taking into account each country's national circumstances, such

⁽¹⁷⁾ Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC): a platform proposed by Japan in January 2022, with the aim of Asian countries sharing the idea of promoting decarbonization and cooperating to advance the energy transition. There are 11 countries participating: Indonesia, Australia, Cambodia, Singapore, Thailand, Japan, the Philippines, Brunei, Viet Nam, Malaysia, and Laos.

as industrial structure and energy mix, with a view to simultaneously achieving decarbonization, economic growth, and energy security. At the meeting, the leaders of the AZEC partner countries adopted the AZEC Leaders' Joint Statement, which reaffirmed that the AZEC partner countries intend to contribute to global decarbonization by accelerating implementation of their regional strategies to promote energy transition and decarbonization through various pathways. In addition, the leaders concurred in the Action Plan for the Next Decade, which consists of the following three pillars: (a) promoting "AZEC solutions," such as developing rules to promote activities that contribute to decarbonization in Asia; (b) launching initiatives for decarbonization and emission reductions in the sectors with high greenhouse gas emissions; and (c) promoting tangible projects. Furthermore, Prime Minister Ishiba acknowledged that approximately 120 cooperation projects have been developed between Japan and AZEC partner countries since the 1st Leaders Meeting in December 2023. He also announced his intention to conduct studies to develop projects in Laos through Japan's Co-creation for common agenda initiative, to support Laos to be a regional clean energy hub in the future, with a view to contributing to the decarbonization in the region.

(F) 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 to these countries. The mechanism allows Japan to acquire a portion of credits from its contribution, assisting both Japan and the partner countries to achieve their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). The "Grand Design and Action Plan for New Capitalism, Follow-up," approved by the Cabinet in June 2022, aims to have around 30 JCM partner countries around the world by 2025, and will accelerate discussions with relevant countries. In 2024, a new Memorandum of Cooperation on the Joint Crediting Mechanism was signed with Ukraine, bringing the number of partner countries to 29 at the end of the year. As of December 2024, more than 250 JCM projects are being implemented with partner countries. Japan will continue to promote projects and

discover new cases to reduce greenhouse gas emissions worldwide.

(G) Request for Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice and Japan's Response

In March 2023, following the adoption of a United Nations General Assembly resolution requesting an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding the obligations of States in respect of climate change, procedures are being carried out for the issuance of the advisory opinion by the ICJ. Japan submitted a written statement to the ICJ in March 2024, and then made a statement at the oral proceedings in December 2024. In the oral statement, Japan explained its basic position and efforts regarding climate action, and expressed Japan's views on its obligations under international law and legal consequences in the field of climate change. Specifically, the report stated that while taking into account established international law in the field of the environment, the ICJ's advisory opinion should determine each country's obligations based on international agreements such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, which are the main legal frameworks for combating climate change and to which the majority of the international community is party. Japan will continue to contribute to the activities of the ICJ, including participation in oral proceedings, thereby actively engaging in strengthening the rule of law in the international community, and will also work proactively to address climate change, which is a common and urgent challenge for all humanity.

(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),⁽¹⁸⁾ 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. Japan established the post of Ambassador in charge of Arctic Affairs to oversee issues related to the Arctic. In

addition, the "Ocean Development Strategy" formulated in 2024 also calls for the pursuit of research and development and sustainable utilization of the Arctic region, as well as the promotion of international cooperation in the Arctic policy.

Japan places importance on cooperation related to the Arctic in its bilateral relations and regional cooperation with the Arctic States. Japan's Nordic Diplomacy Initiative, the basic policy of Japan's Nordic diplomacy, announced during Foreign Minister Kamikawa's visit to Finland in January, also lists the Arctic as a major area of cooperation. Additionally, 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. Furthermore, various forums hosted by the Arctic States and attended by a wide range of stakeholders from industry, government, and academia are also promoting the exchange of opinions and knowledge sharing 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.

⁽¹⁸⁾ An intergovernmental consultation body established in 1996 with the aim of promoting cooperation, coordination, and interaction among the eight Arctic States (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.

(B) The Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) and the Protection of Antarctic Environment

At the 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM46), held in Kochi, India in May, discussions were held on a framework for tourism activities in the Antarctic, information exchange, and the engagement of the Antarctic Treaty System in addressing climate change issues.

(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, 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 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 MATSUMOTO Yoichiro, Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo as the new advisor in April 2020. Moreover, 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, 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 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 22 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 2024, the 7th Advisory Board Meeting was held in April. Furthermore, at the 3rd Symposium on Science and Technology Diplomacy co-hosted by MOFA and the Japan Science and Technology Agency in March, Prof. Matsumoto gave a keynote speech on future science and technology diplomacy in light of the current international situation.

Prof. Matsumoto and Dr. Kotani are working to build and strengthen a network of science and technology advisors from various governments by taking advantage of opportunities such as meetings of the Foreign Ministry Science & Technology Advisors Network (FMSTAN), which brings together science and technology advisors from the foreign ministries of various countries. In May, the two advisors attended the FMSTAN meeting and the International Network for

Governmental Science Advice (INGSA) international conference in Rwanda, where they exchanged views with science and technology advisors from various countries on the nature of scientific advice. In addition, Prof. Matsumoto visited San Francisco in the U.S. in January, Belgium in May, and Europe (London in the UK, Geneva in Switzerland, Strasbourg in France, and Prague in the Czech Republic) in October, while Dr. Kotani visited Fiji in March, as well as Sweden and Germany in October, 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 to raise the level of knowledge on science and technology within MOFA.

In terms of science and technology cooperation with other countries, Japan has concluded 33 bilateral science and technology cooperation agreements with 47 countries and the EU.⁽¹⁹⁾ Based on these agreements, it organizes regular Joint Committee meetings with these countries to conduct intergovernmental dialogue. In 2024, Japan held Joint Committee meetings with Norway, Finland, Canada, the U.S., and South Africa, where the current status and future direction of



Foreign Minister Kamikawa attending the 7th Meeting of the Advisory Board for Promoting Science and Technology Diplomacy (April 22, Tokyo)

cooperation in various fields were discussed with the attendance of relevant ministries and agencies.

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 ITER project to demonstrate the scientific and technological feasibility of fusion energy.

⁽¹⁹⁾ 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.

Section

3

Economic Diplomacy

1 Overview of Economic Diplomacy

In the international community, as competition among nations arises, 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 COVID-19 pandemic caused a rapid deterioration of the global economy, but with its effects now waning, the global economy as a whole has shown signs of a gradual recovery. However, prices are currently rising sharply due to factors such as a recovery in demand and the impact of the situations in Ukraine and the Middle East. The outlook of the global economy 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 energy and commodity costs that remain elevated.

Against this backdrop, Japan continued its attempts to expand and develop a free and fair economic order. Regarding the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the Protocol on the Accession of the United Kingdom (UK), the first economy to join since the agreement entered into force, took effect for 10 countries, including Japan, in December 2024. Approximately two and a half years after the launch of negotiations, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) has seen the IPEF Supply Chain Agreement, the IPEF Clean Economy Agreement, the IPEF Fair Economy Agreement and the IPEF Agreement enter into force.

At the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Japan served as the chair of the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting for the first time in 10 years, and led discussions on the role of the OECD in co-creating a better future under the theme of “Co-creating the Flow of Change.” At the World Trade Organization (WTO), the cornerstone of the multilateral trading system, progress was made regarding negotiations on the Agreement on Electronic Commerce among like-minded members, and the text of the Agreement was published.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) is also focusing more on supporting the overseas expansion of Japanese companies by promoting public-private partnerships, and has appointed “officials in charge of cross-border economic affairs” in several diplomatic missions in order to capture the vitality of the “Global South.”

Japan will continue to advance efforts to promote economic diplomacy, one of the priority areas of its diplomacy, with a focus on: (a) rule-making and efforts in international organizations to expand the free and fair economic order, which includes promoting economic partnership agreements and maintaining and strengthening the multilateral trading system; (b) revitalizing the economy by supporting Japanese companies' overseas business expansion and attracting investment and tourists from overseas; and (c) strengthening economic security.

2 Efforts to expand the free and fair economic order

(1) Promotion of Economic Partnerships

In recent years, despite the advancement of economic globalism, the global economy continues to be

in turmoil due to factors such as more pronounced protectionist movements, Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and the situation in Israel and Palestine. 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 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.

Regarding bilateral Economic Partnership Agreements, the decision was made to launch negotiations on a Japan-Bangladesh EPA in March, with negotiation rounds held in May, November, and December. In September, the decision was made to launch negotiations on an EPA between Japan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the first round of negotiations was held in November. Regarding the Japan-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)⁽¹⁾ EPA, while negotiations had been suspended since 2009, a decision was later made with the GCC side to resume negotiations and the first round of negotiations was held in December. Regarding the Japan-Indonesia EPA, the Protocol amending the Agreement was signed in August. Concerning the CPTPP, at the eighth meeting of the TPP Commission, held in November, the decision was made to establish an Accession Working Group (AWG) for Costa Rica, and in December the Protocol on the Accession of the UK to the CPTPP entered into force for 10 countries, including Japan.

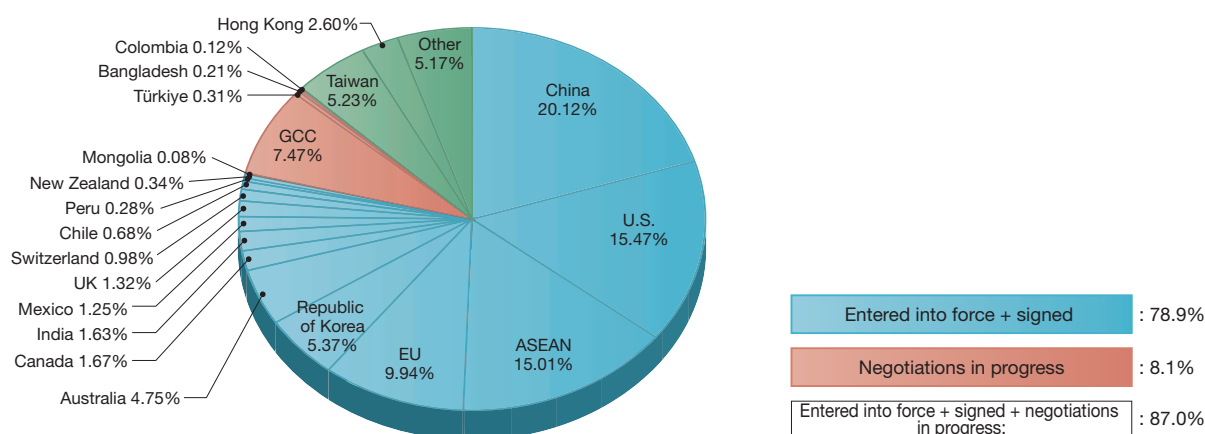
As of the end of 2024, Japan's EPA/FTA ratio (the proportion of trade volume with countries with which Japan has EPA or FTA that have already entered into force or been signed, to Japan's total trade volume) reached approximately 78.9% (source: 2025 Trade Statistics of Japan, Ministry of Finance). Japan 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 EPAs 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 sets high-standard rules in a wide range of areas, including tariffs, services, investment, 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

■ 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 2025)
(Percentages of each country's trade value are rounded to the nearest hundredth)

(1) Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): Established by Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait.

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, the United States (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 2023.

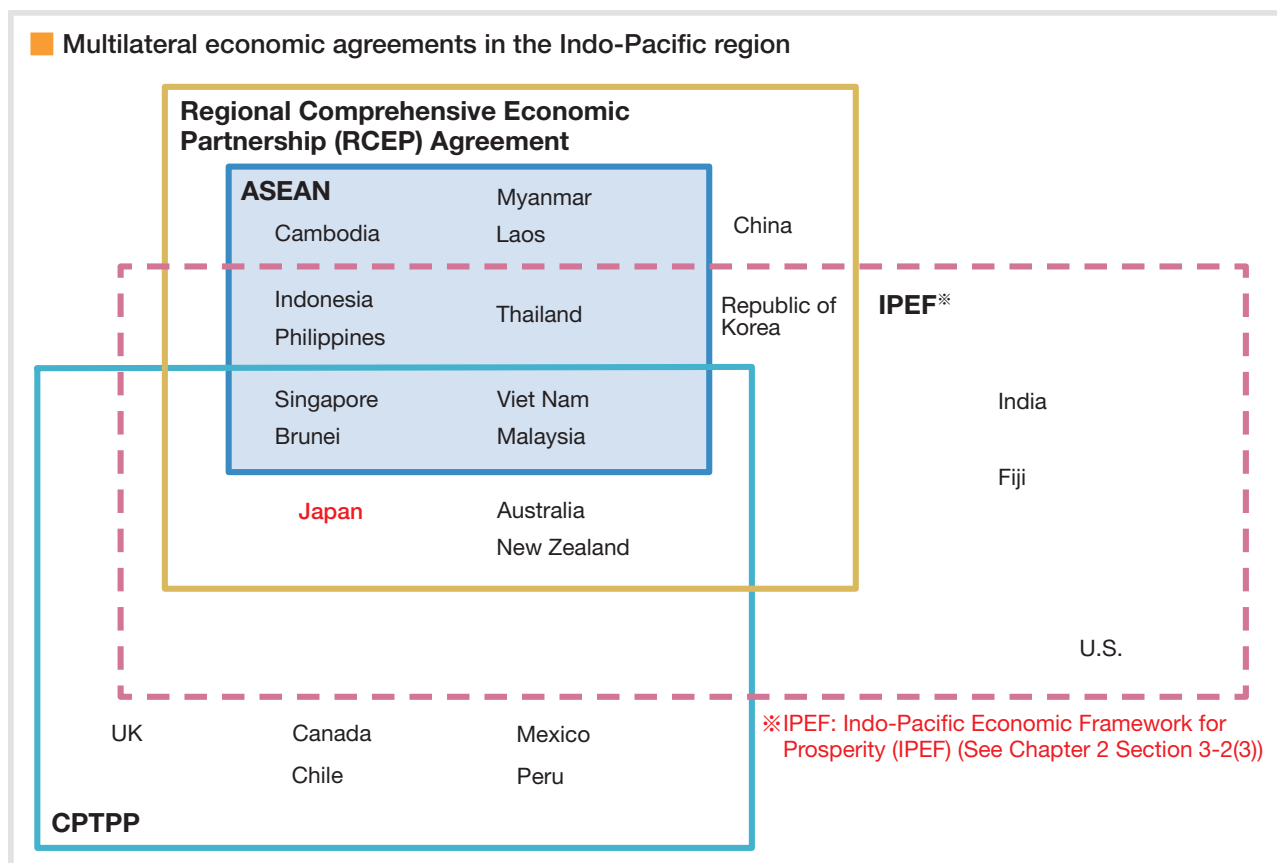
Since the CPTPP entered into force, eight CPTPP Commission meetings have been held mostly at the ministerial level. At the fourth meeting of the TPP Commission, held in June 2021, it was decided to commence the accession process of the UK, which had been formally requested in February of that year, and to establish an AWG for the UK. 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 of the same year, the meeting of the seventh 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. Japan approved the protocol at the 212th session of the Diet (extraordinary session) in December of the same year, and the protocol subsequently entered into force for 10 countries, including

Japan, in December 2024. Furthermore, the eighth meeting of the TPP Commission was held in Canada in November of the same year, where it was decided to commence the accession process for Costa Rica, which had been formally requested in August 2022, and to establish an AWG for Costa Rica. In addition, future actions related to the "General Review" of the agreement were discussed. China requested to join the CPTPP on September 16, 2021; Taiwan on September 22, 2021; Ecuador on December 17, 2021; Uruguay on December 1, 2021; Ukraine in May 2023; and Indonesia in September 2024. Japan will properly assess 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, U.S. in September of the same year.

The IPEF Supply Chain Agreement entered into force on February 24, 2024. Following an online IPEF Ministerial Meeting in March of the same year, an IPEF Ministerial Meeting and Investor Forum were held in Singapore in June. At the Singapore meeting, a signing ceremony was held for the IPEF Clean Economy Agreement, the IPEF Fair Economy Agreement and the IPEF Agreement, and the current status and future efforts regarding the implementation of the IPEF Supply Chain Agreement were discussed. In addition, an investor forum was held that aimed to promote business matching among private companies and institutional investors in order to attract investment in



sustainable infrastructure and climate change technologies. At the forum, panel discussions were held on the clean economy in the Indo-Pacific region, with participation from ministers of IPEF partner countries, as well as public lenders and government agencies, multilateral development banks, institutional investors, and private company representatives. In addition, an IPEF Ministerial Meeting was held online in September, the IPEF Clean Economy Agreement and IPEF Agreement entered into force on October 11, and the IPEF Fair Economy Agreement entered into force on October 12.

Japan will continue to work with other partner countries to contribute to cooperation, stability, prosperity, development, and peace 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 (10.3% of total exports) and third largest import partner (10.3%) (both as of 2023).

In July 2024, ministers held the Fifth Meeting of the Japan-EU EPA Joint Committee, where they welcomed the steady implementation of the Japan-EU EPA in various fields as it marks its fifth anniversary since its entry into force, and exchanged views on progress in areas such as sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS), geographical indications (GI), government procurement, regulatory cooperation, and trade and sustainable development. Also, on the 1st of the same month, the Protocol Amending the Japan-EU EPA to include “provisions on the free flow of data” entered into force. 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. In addition, it is the first EPA concluded by Japan to include a chapter on promoting women's access to the opportunities and benefits created by trade, and with the cooperation of the Japanese and the UK governments, the Japan-UK Women's Economic Empowerment Seminar was held in July.

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 Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)

The conclusion of the EPA with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is important not only for the improvement of the business environment through tariff reductions and established rules, but also in the interest of energy security.

EPA negotiations between Japan and the GCC began in 2006 and were then suspended in 2009. However, when Prime Minister Kishida visited Saudi Arabia in July 2023, he and GCC Secretary General Jasem Al Budaiwi concurred to resume negotiations in 2024, and the first round of negotiations after the resumption was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in December 2024.

The Japan-GCC EPA is expected to provide strong support to the socio-economic reforms being promoted in the GCC countries toward industrial diversification and reduction of dependence on oil, and to contribute to further strengthening relations between Japan and the GCC.

(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 value, 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 meetings 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 eight Joint Committee meetings and three Ministers' Meetings were held by the end of 2024. 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.

(G) Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP)

The APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 (adopted in 2020), which outlines the medium- to long-term direction of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), states that APEC "will advance 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." A FTAAP agenda Work Plan was formulated in 2022, and work is underway to materialize this agenda.

Japan has contributed to sharing knowledge and supporting capacity building on the FTAAP agenda by holding workshops on the "competition chapters" in EPAs and competition policy.

At the APEC Leaders' Meeting in Peru in 2024, the "Ichma⁽²⁾ Statement on A New Look at the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific agenda" was adopted, reaffirming that promoting market-driven economic integration is APEC's primary objective and that APEC will support the progress of the FTAAP agenda. The

⁽²⁾ Ichma: name of a place in an ancient Peruvian civilization

statement also clearly states that new programs will be launched to examine areas such as customs procedures, investment facilitation, digital trade, competition policy, state-owned enterprises, and labor, taking into account existing free trade agreements.

B Bilateral Agreements

(A) Japan-Türkiye Economic Partnership Agreement (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. Amid high expectations from the business communities of both countries for the early conclusion of a Japan-Türkiye EPA, the two countries confirmed to launch negotiations at the Japan-Türkiye Summit Meeting in January 2014, and 17 rounds of negotiations have been held as of December 2024. Türkiye has concluded EPAs or FTAs with more than 20 countries and regions to date, and it is expected that the conclusion of this EPA will facilitate stronger competitiveness for Japanese companies.

(B) Japan-Bangladesh Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)

Bangladesh has traditionally been a friendly country to Japan, and the two countries have fostered good relations through primarily economic cooperation. In April 2023, the relationship between the two countries was elevated to a “Strategic Partnership,” and economic relations between the two countries have further developed in recent years. In light of this situation, the decision was made to launch Japan-Bangladesh EPA negotiations in March 2024, with the aim of expanding trade between the two countries and improving the investment environment by establishing rules. The first round of negotiations was held in May 2024, and the second and third rounds in November and December.

The conclusion of the Japan-Bangladesh EPA is expected to foster even stronger economic relations between the two countries, as well as contribute to realizing a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” and to further elevating Japan’s presence in South Asia.

(C) Japan-United Arab Emirates (UAE) Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)

The UAE is an important strategic partner for Japan in terms of energy security, and in recent years the two countries have been promoting cooperation in a wide range of fields under the framework of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Initiative (CSPI).

In September, the two countries decided to launch negotiations for a Japan-UAE EPA, and the first round of negotiations was held in November. The conclusion of the EPA between Japan and the UAE, in addition to the Japan-GCC EPA being negotiated in parallel, is expected to contribute to further strengthening economic relations between the two countries, including expansion of trade and investment.

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. Regarding the Japan-Indonesia EPA, at the Japan-Indonesia Summit Meeting held in December 2023, it was confirmed that negotiations for the Protocol Amending the Agreement between Japan and the Republic of Indonesia for an Economic Partnership had been substantially concluded. The Protocol was signed in August 2024.

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, 4,259 (as of FY2024) candidates have been accepted from Indonesia, 3,837 from the Philippines, and 1,944 from Viet Nam. From these three countries, the total number of nurses and certified care workers who have passed national exams is 666 and 3,118 individuals, respectively, as of FY2023.

D Investment-related Agreements

Investment-related agreements (Investment agreement and EPA/FTA including investment chapter) constitute an important legal basis to improve predictability for investors and promote their investment activities

Current investment-related agreements^(Note) (as of the end of February 2025)
(L) denotes treaties with investment liberalization (): year of entry into force

Under negotiation

Investment agreement		EPA/FTA including investment chapter	
1 Algeria	9 Ethiopia	1 GCC	
2 Qatar	10 Tajikistan	2 Japan, China, and Republic of Korea	
3 Ghana	11 EU	3 Türkiye	
4 Tanzania	12 Paraguay	4 Bangladesh	
5 Turkmenistan	13 Azerbaijan	5 United Arab Emirates	
6 Senegal	14 Ukraine (revised)		
7 Kyrgyz Republic	15 Serbia		
8 Nigeria	16 Tunisia		

Signed / not in force

- TPP Agreement* (signed February 2016, approved) (EPA)^(L)
 - Argentina (signed December 2018, approved)^(L)
 - Zambia (signed in February 2025, unapproved)
- * TPP Agreement denotes Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement

In force (terminated agreements excluded)

Investment agreement			EPA including investment chapter		
Note: A private investment arrangement with investment liberalization was made between Japan and Taiwan in 2011.					
1	Egypt (1978)	14	Peru (2009) ^(L)	25	Uruguay (2017) ^(L)
2	Sri Lanka (1982)	15	Papua New Guinea (2014)	26	Iran (2017)
3	China (1989)	16	Kuwait (2014) ^(L)	27	Oman (2017)
4	Türkiye (1993)	17	Iraq (2014)	28	Kenya (2017)
5	Hong Kong (1997)	18	Japan, China and Republic of Korea (2014)	29	Israel (2017) ^(L)
6	Pakistan (2002)	19	Myanmar (2014) ^(L)	30	Armenia (2019) ^(L)
7	Bangladesh (1999)	20	Mozambique (2014) ^(L)	31	Jordan (2020)
8	Russia (2000)	21	Colombia (2015) ^(L)	32	United Arab Emirates (2020)
9	Republic of Korea (2003) ^(L)	22	Kazakhstan (2015)	33	Cote d'Ivoire (2021) ^(L)
10	Viet Nam (2004) ^(L)	23	Ukraine (2015)	34	Georgia (2021) ^(L)
11	Cambodia (2008) ^(L)	24	Saudi Arabia (2017)	35	Morocco (2022)
12	Laos (2008) ^(L)			36	Bahrain (2023)
13	Uzbekistan (2009) ^(L)			37	Angola (2024) ^(L)

Note: Investment agreement and EPA/FTA including investment chapter

by establishing common rules for the protection of investors and their investment assets, enhancement of transparency in regulations, expansion of investment opportunities, procedures for investment dispute settlement, and other matters. Japan has actively engaged in concluding investment-related agreements, as these agreements are considered to improve the investment environment for Japanese companies overseas as well as to attract foreign investment to the Japanese market.

In February 2024, the decision was made to launch negotiations to amend the Japan-Ukraine Investment Agreement, and in July, a decision was made to launch negotiations on a Japan-Serbia Investment Agreement. That same month, the Japan-Angola Investment Agreement entered into force, and in December, the decision was made to launch negotiations on the Japan-Tunisia Investment Agreement. In February 2025, the Japan-Zambia Investment Agreement was signed. As of the end of February 2025, 54 investment-related

agreements have entered into force (37 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 57 investment-related agreements covering 82 countries and regions. Including investment-related agreements that are currently under negotiation, these investment-related agreements will cover 96 countries/regions and approximately 95% of Japan’s outbound direct foreign investment.⁽³⁾

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), and to prevent tax evasion and avoidance, and provide

⁽³⁾ “Regional balance of Direct Investment (Assets),” Ministry of Finance (All regions) (As of the end of 2023)

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 network.

Entering into force in 2024 were a tax treaty with Algeria in January and a tax treaty with Greece in December. New (fully revised) tax treaties with Ukraine (February), Turkmenistan (December), and Armenia were also signed. As of December 2024, Japan has concluded 87 tax treaties applied to 155 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 24 as of December 2024.

(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. The world is currently facing a number of geopolitical challenges, as well as changes in the global economy such as the development of digital trade and new challenges such as non-market policies and practices and economic coercion. It is undeniable that the WTO has not been able to adequately address these crises and challenges, and the need for WTO reform has never been more urgent 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.

(B) 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13)

The 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) was held in Abu Dhabi, UAE from February 26 to March 2. At MC13, in light of the new challenges facing the global economy, discussions were held on the role of the WTO as the cornerstone of the international trading order and the direction of future efforts. Participating as a representative of MOFA, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUJI Kiyoto held bilateral meetings with WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and representatives from each country in an effort to coordinate opinions toward M13 outcomes.

As concrete outcomes of MC13, the ministers confirmed the progress made so far regarding WTO reform and shared the intention to continue to ceaselessly promote reform in the future. With regard to reforming the dispute settlement system, the ministers concurred to accelerate discussions with the views to having a fully and well-functioning dispute settlement system accessible to all WTO Members by 2024. In addition, it was decided that the moratorium on the imposition of customs duties on electronic transmissions, which has been continuously extended at the WTO since 1998, will be extended until the next Ministerial Conference (MC14)⁽⁴⁾ in March 2026. In addition, at MC13, the accession procedures for Comoros and Timor-Leste were completed.⁽⁵⁾ As an outcome of MC13, a Ministerial Declaration that confirmed these achievements was adopted.

Since the WTO bases its decisions on consensus, MC13 was unable to reach a consensus on topics where agreement was initially expected due to opposition from some members, and no results were achieved. This once again highlighted the difficulty of achieving results within the WTO given the increasing diversity of its membership.

⁽⁴⁾ The 14th Ministerial Meeting is scheduled to be held from March 26 to 29, 2026.

⁽⁵⁾ Comoros and Timor-Leste formally joined the WTO on August 21 and August 30, respectively.

(C) Formulation of rules in line with the times

The Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, adopted at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) in June 2022, aims to ensure the sustainable use of living marine resources by, among other things, prohibiting subsidies that lead to illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Japan, which has already accepted the agreement, is persistently reaching out to members that have not yet accepted it to gain acceptance by two-thirds of all members as necessary for the agreement to enter into force. Japan is also engaged constructively in discussions toward an early conclusion of “second wave” negotiations on the agreement, which aims to achieve a comprehensive agreement on fisheries subsidies.

In addition to rule-making by all WTO members, such as the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, Japan has been promoting Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs)⁽⁶⁾ as a new initiative for rule-making by like-minded members. The JSIs cover three main areas: investment facilitation, e-commerce, and services domestic regulation. Regarding investment facilitation, at MC13, Japan declared the conclusion of negotiations on the “Agreement on Investment Facilitation for Development,” and subsequently called on other members to incorporate the agreement as an annex to the WTO Agreement. Regarding e-commerce, Japan, together with Australia and Singapore, led the discussions as a co-convenor and contributed to the publication of the text of the “Agreement on Electronic Commerce” in July 2024. In addition, with regard to the new disciplines on services domestic regulation, for which the negotiation among like-minded members was concluded in December 2021, the WTO procedures to incorporate the new disciplines as additional commitments to the schedules of respective participating members were concluded in February 2024, resulting in a concrete achievement of rule-making by the like-minded at the WTO.

(D) 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. In March 2023, Japan joined the Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (MPIA), which was launched by like-minded countries in 2020 as a framework to temporarily replace the functions of the Appellate Body, and has continued to actively participate in discussions on reform of the dispute settlement system even after joining the MPIA.

As of December 31, 2024, four cases to which Japan was one of the parties to the dispute had been brought to the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism, with the following developments in 2024.

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 2023. 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 shared an intention to set the reasonable period of time for China to implement the recommendations and rulings by May 8, 2024. China subsequently conducted a reinvestigation to implement the DSB's recommendations and announced in May 2024 that it would continue to maintain the measures. In July, China announced the launch of a sunset review of the measures (an investigation into the need to continue the anti-dumping measures); however, the stainless steel products at issue from Japan were not subject to the review, and the anti-dumping measures against Japan in this dispute were terminated.

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

⁽⁶⁾ The Joint Statement Initiatives refer to initiatives based on a joint statement issued by plurilateral like-minded members. They were adopted at the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference in December 2017 and mainly include initiatives on (a) services domestic regulation, (b) e-commerce, and (c) investment facilitation.

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) 2024 OECD Ministerial Council Meeting

The 2024 Ministerial Council Meeting, chaired by Japan for the first time in 10 years to mark the 60th anniversary of its accession to the OECD, was held in Paris, France on May 2 and 3. The meeting was held under the theme of “Co-creating the Flow of Change,” and six ministers attended from Japan, including Prime Minister Kishida and Foreign Minister Kamikawa.



Prime Minister Kishida delivering the Chair's keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting (May 2, Paris, France; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)



Prime Minister Kishida attending the ceremony to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the OECD Southeast Asia Regional Programme (May 2, Paris, France; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

In his keynote speech as chair, Prime Minister Kishida emphasized the importance of uniting under the spirit of “Co-creating the Flow of Change” to overcome the crises facing the international community, as the global economy faces risks such as inflation and disruptions in energy and food supplies as well as fragmentation in global supply chains. He also noted that 60 years have passed since Japan joined the OECD, and that as the international community faces multipolarity, division, and conflict, it is important for the OECD, which is made up of member countries with shared values, to reach out to non-member countries in various regions around the world, including Southeast Asia.

(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,⁽⁷⁾ 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's rules and norms. In this context, the OECD has been working to strengthen its ties with the region through policy dialogues, including through the Southeast Asia Regional Programme (SEARP). Concrete results include the decision in February to begin the OECD accession process for Indonesia, the first country from Southeast Asia, and the decision in June to begin the accession process for Thailand.

At the 2024 Ministerial Council Meeting, a ceremony commemorating the 10th anniversary of SEARP was held, in which Prime Minister Kishida announced

⁽⁷⁾ 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.

the launch of the Japan OECD-ASEAN Partnership Program (JOAPP) in order to leverage the OECD's strengths in reliable data and analysis for sustainable growth in Southeast Asia.

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).

(E) Contributions in Terms of Financial and Human Resources

As of 2024, Japan was the second largest financial contributor to the OECD, covering 8.5 % of the OECD's mandatory contributions (the U.S. is first, covering 18.3 %). Moreover, Japanese nationals have successfully served as one of the Deputy Secretary-Generals (including the incumbent Deputy Secretary-General, TAKEUCHI Yoshiki), and 88 Japanese staff work at the OECD Secretariat as of the end of 2023.

(3) Intellectual Property Protection

Strengthening the protection of intellectual property is crucial to promoting technological innovation and, through it, achieving economic growth. Japan is contributing to advancing multilateral discussions and the strengthening of international collaboration at APEC,

the WTO (TRIPS),⁽⁸⁾ and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). In addition, Japan is working to improve an environment for ensuring that 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, MOFA has appointed Intellectual Property Officers at almost all diplomatic establishments overseas, and is collecting information, considering countermeasures, and lobbying the authorities of the countries concerned to ensure appropriate actions are taken. MOFA is also holding meetings with the aim of strengthening the capacities of these officers, and is working to strengthen the response systems of diplomatic missions overseas by exchanging intellectual property-related information in each country and region, as well as sharing experience and knowledge on responding to infringement cases faced by Japanese companies. In 2024, meetings were held in Southeast Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East and North Africa.

COLUMN

International Conferences and Bilateral Meetings
— Behind the Scenes of the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting

■ Behind the Scenes of the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting

What comes to mind when you hear the year 1964? This was a year marked by many historic moments that include the Tokyo Olympics, the opening of the Tokaido Shinkansen, and OH Sadaharu's 55 home runs. That same year, Japan joined the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In 2024, the 60th anniversary of Japan's accession to the OECD, Japan chaired the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting held in Paris,



Photo from the 2024 OECD Ministerial Council Meeting (May 2, Paris, France)

⁽⁸⁾ TRIPS Agreement: Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights

leading discussions and adopting a Ministerial Council Statement under the theme of “Co-Creating the Flow of Change: Leading Global Discussions with Objective and Reliable Approaches towards Sustainable and Inclusive Growth.” This column highlights the significance and outcomes of the meetings Japan held with various countries behind the scenes of these high-profile achievements.

■ The Significance of Bilateral Meetings in Multilateral Meetings

Did you know that many bilateral meetings take place on the sidelines of multilateral meetings? In the world of diplomacy, opportunities for bilateral meetings that take place between such multilateral meetings are called “margins.” Just as it is said that in the world of art that true masters value empty space, the same is true in the world of diplomacy. Bilateral meetings in such fora can at times lead to highly significant diplomatic outcomes for both countries.

For example, in 2019, relations between the United States (U.S.) and China had been increasingly tense with both countries implementing retaliatory tariffs on each other. Amidst this, at the U.S.-China Summit Meeting held on the margins of the G20 Buenos Aires Summit, both countries shared the view on temporarily suspending further tariff measures and holding more discussions.



Meeting between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Indonesia's Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga (May 2, Paris, France)

■ Outcomes of Bilateral Meetings at the 2024 Ministerial Council Meeting

The 2024 Ministerial Council Meeting, chaired by Japan, was attended by OECD member countries, as well as accession candidate countries, Key Partner countries, and officials from international organizations, and Japan held bilateral meetings with various countries on the margins. These included meaningful discussions between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and her counterparts in the U.S., Mexico, Indonesia, and Viet Nam. The OECD was also on the agenda for these meetings as they took place on the margins of the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting. With regard

to outreach¹ to Southeast Asian countries, for example, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a meeting with Indonesia's Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto where the two ministers welcomed the adoption of the OECD's accession roadmap for Indonesia and agreed to continue cooperating in a wide range of economic affairs. In a meeting with U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Kurt M. Campbell, both sides shared the significance that the Southeast Asian countries' accession process to the OECD needs to proceed in an open, transparent, and swift manner.

Such bilateral meetings held on the margins of the Ministerial Council Meeting not only contributed to strengthening bilateral relations but also proved fruitful in terms of the OECD's outreach activities to Southeast Asia.

■ Summary

This column explored examples of how bilateral meetings between Japan and other countries held on the margins of the 2024 OECD Ministerial Council Meeting also led to multilateral diplomatic outcomes at the OECD. Many bilateral meetings take place at multilateral conferences, and each bilateral meeting always has some kind of intention or purpose. By thinking about the context behind such meetings, you may deepen your understanding of diplomacy and find it more fascinating than you expected.

¹ Outreach: In this context, the OECD cooperates with member countries to promote the dissemination of OECD standards to non-OECD member countries, and works together in the preparation of various policy analysis reports and the hosting of international conferences.

3 Leading Discussions at International Conferences

(1) G7

The G7 is united in its response to the various challenges facing the international community. In the face of new challenges such as Russia's continued aggression against Ukraine and the intensifying situation in the Middle East, the two perspectives emphasized at the G7 Hiroshima Summit 2023 — upholding a free and open international order based on the rule of law and strengthening engagement with international partners beyond the G7 — are becoming increasingly important, and these were carried forward under the Italian Presidency of the G7 in 2024.

At the G7 Apulia Summit held from June 13 to 15, the G7 members discussed issues ranging from Africa and immigration, which Italy had set as its top priority issues as the Presidency, to other issues regarding the regional situations in Ukraine, the Middle East, the Indo-Pacific, as well as economic security, AI, climate change and energy and development. In so doing, the G7 demonstrated its commitment to taking the lead in addressing the challenges facing the international community.⁽⁹⁾ Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky also participated in part of the session on the situation in Ukraine.

In addition, Prime Minister Kishida took into account the results of the G7 Hiroshima Summit held in the previous year, and communicated Japan's position and initiatives as follows.

(a) Regarding Africa, in addition to the importance of expanding cooperation that reflects the expressed wishes of African countries, Prime Minister Kishida stressed that the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) and other initiatives should be further promoted along with Africa's needs.

(b) Concerning the situation in Israel and Palestine, Prime Minister Kishida stressed that a ceasefire and an early calming down of the situation are of utmost importance, and that it is necessary to achieve an immediate ceasefire, the release of hostages,

improvement of the humanitarian situation, and a lasting ceasefire.

(c) Regarding the situation in Ukraine, Prime Minister Kishida stated that, based on the belief that “Ukraine today may be East Asia tomorrow,” he will continue to strongly promote sanctions against Russia and support for Ukraine. The G7 leaders reached a consensus on the launch of Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration (ERA) loans to Ukraine totaling approximately 50 billion dollars and concurred on measures to implement the ERA loans in October after the Apulia Summit.

(d) As the lead speaker, Prime Minister Kishida comprehensively explained Japan's views on the situation in the Indo-Pacific and emphasized the need to continue addressing issues in this region as a priority issue for the G7. The 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 the abductions issue.

(e) On economic security, Prime Minister Kishida led the discussion by stating Japan's position on addressing economic security challenges, including overcapacity and economic coercion, as well as how to advance international cooperation.

(f) Regarding AI, Prime Minister Kishida emphasized the urgent need to establish governance to



G7 Apulia Summit (June 13, Apulia, Italy; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

⁽⁹⁾ For details of the G7 Apulia Summit, including the outcome document, see the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: https://www.mofa.go.jp/ocm/ec/pagewe_000001_00034.html



promote safe, secure, and trustworthy AI, and stressed the importance of implementing the International Guiding Principles and Code of Conduct developed under the Hiroshima AI Process in the previous year, as well as advancing efforts beyond the G7.

(g) Regarding energy, Prime Minister Kishida stated that it remains important to take an integrated approach to energy security, the climate crisis, and geopolitical risks, without hindering economic growth, and aim for the common goal of net-zero emissions through various pathways tailored to the circumstances of each country. He also pointed out the importance of cooperation with producing countries regarding critical minerals, the demand for which will increase alongside the energy transition.

Under the Italian G7 Presidency in 2024, in addition to the Apulia Summit in June, the G7 leaders held video conferences and teleconferences in February, April, and October, discussing issues such as Russia's aggression against Ukraine and responses to the intensifying situation in the Middle East. In December, a teleconference of the G7 leaders was held to conclude the year of Italy's G7 Presidency.

A total of six G7 Foreign Ministers' Meetings were held in 2024, including those held online. In continuation of Japan's Presidency in the previous year, the G7 ministers engaged with close communication on the situations in the Middle East, Ukraine, and the Indo-Pacific as the main agenda. At the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Capri, Italy from April 17 to 19, ministers reaffirmed their commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific based on the rule of law and concurred on working closely together as the G7 to address the situation in the Middle East. They also reaffirmed their unwavering determination to support Ukraine in its prolonged hardships.

At the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Fiuggi, Italy on November 25 and 26, the ministers concurred that it is important for the G7, which shares the same values and principles, to maintain and reinforce cooperation, work closely with many other countries, and firmly uphold a free and open international order



G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting (November 26, Fiuggi, Italy)

based on the rule of law, amid growing division in the international society. Regarding the situation in the Middle East, the ministers discussed the importance of diplomatic efforts to restore stability, as well as cooperation to improve the humanitarian situation, and concurred on addressing the situation in cooperation with the international community. Regarding Ukraine, they concurred on advancing efforts to realize a just and lasting peace in Ukraine. Regarding the Indo-Pacific, the ministers acknowledged that the security of the Indo-Pacific and Europe had become inseparable more than ever, and reaffirmed that relevant countries, including the G7, will continue cooperation to protect a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

Regarding the G7 Trade Ministers' Meetings, the first meeting took place online on February 7, where the ministers confirmed their commitment to the G7 cooperation toward the success of the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference.⁽¹⁰⁾ (See Section 2 (2) A (B).) The second meeting was held in Reggio Calabria, Italy, on July 16 and 17, where they had candid discussions on issues such as maintaining and strengthening a free and fair multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core and ensuring a level playing field (LPF), as well as trade and environmental sustainability, economic resilience, and economic security.⁽¹¹⁾

(2) G20

The G20 is the premier forum for international economic cooperation participated in by both major developed and emerging countries. At the G20 Rio de

⁽¹⁰⁾ Outcome document of the first G7 Trade Ministers' Meeting, see the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/100618409.pdf>

⁽¹¹⁾ For details of the second G7 Trade Ministers' Meeting, including the outcome document, see the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: https://www.mofa.go.jp/ocm/it/pageite_000001_00452.html





G20 Rio de Janeiro Summit (November 18, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

Janeiro Summit held in Brazil on November 18 and 19, amid Russia's continued aggression against Ukraine and intensifying situation in the Middle East, discussions were held on important issues facing the international community, such as sustainable development, measures to combat hunger and poverty, global governance reform including reform of the United Nations (UN) and multilateral development banks (MDBs), climate change, and energy transition.⁽¹²⁾

Prime Minister Ishiba announced that Japan will actively participate in the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, which is a top priority for Brazil, then-G20 Presidency, and emphasized Japan's intention to cooperate on addressing challenges facing the international community that include climate change, energy transition, the environment, and risk reduction. There are many areas in which the G20 should lead international cooperation, and its role is becoming increasingly important. Prime Minister Ishiba therefore strongly advocated for the need to overcome conflict and foster global governance in which all countries share responsibility, and the G20 Rio de Janeiro Leaders' Declaration included the phrase "share a collective responsibility." Prime Minister Ishiba also emphasized the importance of a free and open international order based on the rule of law, and clearly asserted Japan's position on Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the situation in the Middle East.

The G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in Rio de Janeiro on February 21 and 22, with Foreign

Minister Kamikawa in attendance. At the meeting, the ministers discussed issues such as how to respond to the situations in Ukraine and the Middle East, as well as global governance reform, including UN Security Council reform. Foreign Minister Kamikawa emphasized Japan's intention to work proactively to realize a world in which the rule of law and human dignity are secured. On September 25, the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held at the UN Headquarters with global governance reform as its agenda, and a "Call to Action on Global Governance Reform" was issued as an outcome document.

(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 Putrajaya Vision 2040, which outlines APEC's medium- to long-term direction, clearly states that "Our vision is an open, dynamic, resilient, and peaceful Asia-Pacific community by 2040, for the prosperity of all our people and future generations." Under this vision, the organization is carrying out activities such as liberalizing and facilitating trade and investment in the region, promoting regional economic integration, and engaging in economic and technical cooperation in the region. Japan's active involvement in APEC and promotion of cooperation is of great significance to supporting the country's economic growth and the overseas expansion of Japanese companies.

APEC was hosted by Peru in 2024, and under the theme of "Empower, Include, Grow," the following priority issues were set and discussed at various APEC meetings: trade and investment for inclusive and connected growth, innovation and digitalization to promote the transition to a formal and global economy, and sustainable growth for resilient development.

At the Leaders' Meeting in Lima, Peru on November 15 and 16, the 2024 APEC Leaders' Machu Picchu Declaration was adopted and called for realizing a free, open, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent, inclusive,

⁽¹²⁾ For details of the G20 Rio de Janeiro Summit, including the outcome document, see the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: https://www.mofa.go.jp/ecm/ec/pagewe_000001_00001.html



and predictable trade and investment environment, support for the rules-based multilateral trading system and WTO reform, and the advancement of women's economic empowerment. Additionally, a Chair's Statement was issued regarding the situations in Ukraine and the Middle East.

At the meeting, Prime Minister Ishiba emphasized the importance of maintaining and strengthening a rules-based, free, open, fair, and transparent trade and investment environment, as well as the multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core, in order to achieve sustainable growth and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. He stated that he would further promote WTO reform and high-quality infrastructure investment, as well as the advancement of women's economic empowerment and support for capacity

building. He also stressed the importance of formulating international rules through an international framework to achieve data free flow with trust, energy transition toward decarbonization that includes the efforts of the AZEC, and a reduction in food loss and waste in order to foster inclusive growth in the region.

In addition, he noted that Russia's aggression against Ukraine is a clear challenge to the international order based on the rule of law, and expressed serious concern about the further development of military cooperation between North Korea and Russia. He also spoke on the situation in the Middle East, strongly urging all parties involved to exercise utmost restraint and comply with international law.

The ROK will host APEC in 2025.

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. Support for Japanese companies by the government is also becoming increasingly important in the interest of incorporating into the Japanese economy the momentum of economic growth overseas, such as that of the Global South.

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. Under the motto of being "open and responsible government offices," diplomatic missions overseas have ambassadors and consuls-general, who, together with Japanese business support officers and other staff, are at the forefront

of providing support tailored to conditions in a specific region, such as providing various information to Japanese companies and lobbying foreign governments. Since April, "officials in charge of cross-border economic affairs" have been appointed to effectively support Japanese companies engaged in cross-border activities that include entering third-country markets, and support from a regional perspective has begun. (As of the end of December 2024, these officers have been appointed to 17 diplomatic missions overseas in 14 countries, with an eye on such markets as Africa, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Central and South America.) In addition, MOFA provides consultation services regarding economic coercion, and some diplomatic missions overseas in Asia, Africa, and other regions utilize Japanese lawyers who are familiar with local laws, regulations and legal situations to hold seminars and legal consultations on local legal systems.

In addition to consultations about business problems, an important function performed by diplomatic missions overseas for Japanese companies is the promotion and publicity of the "Japan Brand" for products, technologies, and services from Japanese companies, as well as for Japanese agricultural, forestry, and fishery products at various events that include the reception

to celebrate His Majesty the Emperor's birthday, and exhibitions. These missions have actively provided embassies and ambassadors' residences and other facilities as venues for promoting and publicizing Japanese products and foods through events such as product exhibitions and tastings by Japanese companies, as well as for seminars aimed at business development, local government trade fairs, and interacting and networking with local companies and related organizations.

(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 58 meetings were held by December 2024. This Meeting has been annually revising and following up on the "Infrastructure System Export Strategy" formulated in 2013, and in December 2024, in light of changes surrounding the development of overseas infrastructure such as structural changes in the global infrastructure market, it formulated the "Infrastructure System Overseas Promotion Strategy 2030," which sets a course for going beyond traditional concepts of infrastructure to take on challenges in new areas while implementing policy, with the public and private sectors working together to achieve growth for both Japan and its partner countries. The strategy lays out specific measures across three pillars: (a) improving Japan's "earning power" and strengthening international competitiveness through co-creation with partner countries, (b) responding quickly to new societal demands such as economic security and ensuring national interests, and (c) responding flexibly to embrace social changes such as GX (Green Transformation) and DX (Digital Transformation) as opportunities. The strategy also sets a goal of achieving 45 trillion yen in orders for infrastructure systems by 2030. In addition to promoting top-level sales, including at the leaders and foreign minister levels, MOFA is also providing support through diplomatic missions overseas and by utilizing Official Development Assistance (ODA).

(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)

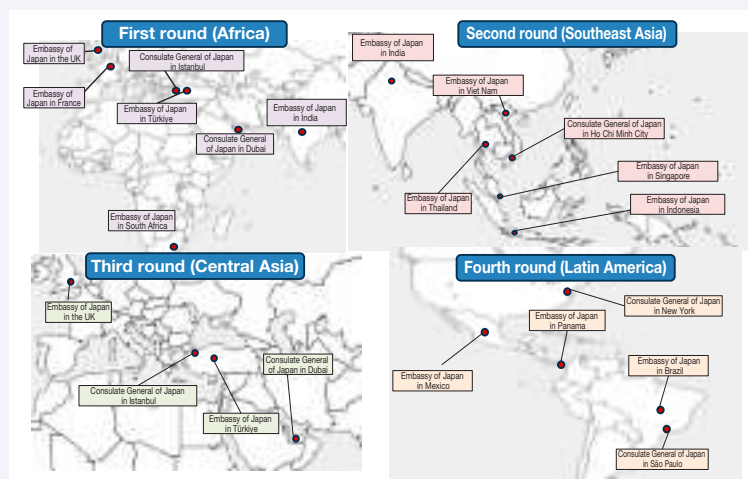
Expanding exports of Japan's agricultural, forestry, fishery, and food products is a major objective of the Government of Japan. In December 2020, the government formulated the "Strategy to Realize Export Expansion of Agricultural, Forestry, Fishery and Food Products," and is making a concerted effort to achieve export goals for agricultural, forestry, fishery and food products. This strategy was revised in 2021, June 2022, December 2022, and December 2023 as part of efforts to further expand exports. 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 85 diplomatic missions overseas in 63 countries and regions, and some of these missions also have advisors for promoting the export of agriculture, forestry, fishery, and food products who are familiar with local conditions. 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. 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 to connect these parties and overseas businesses, as well as to plan 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

SPECIAL
FEATUREAppointment of Officials in Charge of Cross-border
Economic Affairs

In recent years, the economic presence of developing and emerging countries, the so-called “Global South,” has been rapidly rising. To further promote economic growth in Japan, it is becoming increasingly important to leverage the vitality of the Global South. Based on this recognition, some Japanese companies are accelerating their business expansion across borders and regions by engaging in overseas production activities with an eye toward exporting to third countries that have potential for future growth, as well as by collaborating with local enterprises in their host countries in order to advance into rapidly growing third-country markets. On the other hand, attempting such business exposes Japanese companies to various risks, such as sudden additions or changes to regulations by the authorities of the third countries where they are looking to expand into or export to, as well as tax issues, requests for unfair benefits (bribery), and delays in obtaining visas and work permits. Additionally, any company looking to smoothly expand into or export to a third country will find that it is essential to access information on the country's politics, economy, and security, as well as to collaborate with trustworthy partner companies from other countries.

In light of these challenges and realities, and to be able to respond flexibly to the individual circumstances and needs of Japanese companies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has appointed new officials in charge of cross-border economic affairs to several diplomatic missions overseas throughout 2024. Previously, Japanese business support officers at embassies or consulates-general located in each country mainly responded to individual consultations and requests for support regarding business activities in their respective countries. Now, officials in charge of cross-border economic affairs will be able to respond more precisely and proactively to the needs of Japanese companies that are interested in expanding into the Global South and are strategically expanding their business overseas with a regional perspective. Specifically, these officials in charge of cross-border economic affairs will provide information on the business environment of third-country markets to companies expanding into or exporting to those markets, and upon companies' requests, they will coordinate diplomatic approaches to the governments of these countries. MOFA will also actively engage in networking with foreign companies that are familiar with the business environments in third countries.



Designated Regions of the Officials in Charge of Cross-Border Economic Affairs



An online exchange of views between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and officials in charge of cross-border economic affairs (July 12)

Going forward, MOFA will continue to make effective use of these officials in charge of cross-border economic affairs while also taking advantage of the network between MOFA, relevant ministries and agencies, and diplomatic missions overseas to proactively support Japanese companies as a concerted national effort.

priorities for the Government of Japan, and 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, a total of 49 countries and regions have lifted their export restrictions. In addition, Taiwan announced further easing of import restriction measures in September.

As of the end of 2024, six countries and regions still maintain regulations (Regulations including import suspension: the ROK, China, Hong Kong, Macau, Russia; Requirements including inspection certificates: Taiwan). China, Hong Kong, Macau and Russia currently maintain newly strengthened regulations implemented following the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea in August 2023.

With regard to China, in September 2024, the two countries announced a “Shared Recognition between Japan and China” regarding discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea and import restrictions on Japanese aquatic products. After conducting additional measures under the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Chinese government will initiate adjustment of its import restriction measures

on Japanese aquatic products, and will steadily restore imports of Japanese aquatic products. In light of this announcement, Japan will continue to call on the Chinese government at all levels to resume imports of Japanese aquatic products as quickly as possible.

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, 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.

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

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,”⁽¹³⁾ 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 and other organizations have made further progress in their efforts toward low-carbonization. Since 2021, numerous countries around the world have declared that they will achieve carbon neutrality in the second half of this century. On the other hand, 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

⁽¹³⁾ 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.

against Ukraine, and since October 2023 due to the intensifying situation in the Middle East. Although energy prices in 2024 have retrieved relative stability in 2024, 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 95% 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, there is also a call to address climate change. In October 2020, the Government of Japan announced its intention to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, and in April 2021 expressed a new target to achieve an emissions reduction of 46% compared to FY2013 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). Since May 2024, the Strategic Policy Committee under the Advisory Committee for Natural Resources and Energy has been holding discussions toward formulating the Seventh Strategic Energy Plan.

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.

(A) Gathering and Analysis of Resource-Related Information at Diplomatic Missions Overseas, and Strategy Meeting on Diplomatic Missions Overseas Concerning Energy and Mineral Resources

In order to focus on the acquisition and stable supply of energy and mineral resources, and with a view to strengthening the function of diplomatic missions overseas, "Special Assistants for Energy and Mineral Resources" have been assigned to 60 diplomatic missions overseas in a total of 53 countries as of the end of 2024. These individuals collect and consolidate on-site information on oil, natural gas, coal, and critical mineral resources, and strive to build and strengthen comprehensive and mutually beneficial bilateral relations with resource-rich countries through liaison and coordination with private companies and related organizations.

Furthermore, since 2009, MOFA has been holding regular Strategy Meetings on Diplomatic Missions Overseas Concerning Energy and Mineral Resources, bringing together representatives of diplomatic missions overseas located in major resource-rich countries as well as ministries, agencies, institutions, experts, and companies, to discuss diplomatic efforts to ensure a stable supply of energy and mineral resources, formulate policy, and strengthen mutual cooperation. In 2024, a meeting with the theme of "strengthening cooperation toward building diversified and resilient supply chains for critical minerals" was held that saw participants share the current status and challenges of resource diplomacy efforts in each country, as well as reaffirm the importance of cooperation between relevant domestic organizations and diplomatic missions overseas.

(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 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 energy situation, Japan is also encouraging resource-producing countries to increase their production in order to stabilize the energy market. In May 2024, Prime Minister Kishida held a video conference with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed, and in July, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a meeting with Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and Special Envoy to Japan Sultan Al Jaber of the UAE. In addition to making use of the opportunities presented by successive summit and ministerial-level meetings with oil-producing countries, Japan also made efforts to lobby at various levels through its diplomatic missions and relevant ministries and agencies.

(C) Initiatives and Results Achieved by International and Other Organizations

Japan makes active use of international fora and rules to coordinate and collaborate internationally toward achieving a stable energy supply and enhancing the diversity and 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 achieving a system for the stable supply of critical mineral resources essential for achieving energy transitions.

In February, Prime Minister Kishida sent a video message to the IEA Ministerial Meeting in which he expressed Japan's expectation for further contributions

from the IEA, whose core mission is energy security, toward realizing an orderly global energy transition under diversified paths, and stated that Japan would continue to cooperate with the IEA. In addition, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji, who attended the meeting, stated that as the world undertakes a historic energy transition amid geopolitical risks and the climate crisis, in order to accelerate this transition through various means toward a shared goal of achieving net zero emissions, it is important to promote broad collaboration between the public, private, and academic sectors, as well as the use of clean energy technologies. He also stated that Japan would continue to work with the IEA.

In September, a Principals' Meeting of the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP) was held that saw Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Akahori state that strengthening engagement with resource-producing countries and financial institutions is extremely important for sustainable mineral resource development and building diversified and resilient supply chains for critical minerals. He also noted that it is important to understand the challenges and support needs of resource-producing countries through MSP activities and to work to promote individual projects and cooperation in order to meet the expectations of resource-rich countries. In addition, he made clear Japan's position of strengthening cooperation with MSP member countries and resource-producing countries.

Furthermore, with a view to securing its rights and interests over its continental shelf, including the resources contained in the surrounding seabed areas, Japan has been working to establish a continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles (extended continental shelf) in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). In 2008, Japan made a submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) for the extension of Japan's continental shelves, and in 2012 received recommendations that a certain range of extension be approved. With regard to the extended continental shelf in the Ogasawara Plateau Region, following necessary consultations with the U.S., as the sole country concerned, most of that area was prescribed as Japan's extended continental shelf in June 2024.

(D) Adoption of a Modernized Text for the Energy Charter Treaty

The Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) is a multilateral treaty that entered into force in April 1998 (entered into force for 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⁽¹⁴⁾ has been signed by 47 countries and organizations mostly located in Europe and Central Asia (as of January 2025). Following negotiations to revise the treaty since 2020, a Modernized text of the Energy Charter Treaty was adopted at the 35th meeting of the Energy Charter Conference in December 2024. The modernized treaty includes the application of the investment protection provisions of the treaty to new energy sources such as hydrogen and ammonia, clarification of the obligations of Contracting Parties regarding investment protection, more detailed procedure of Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS), establishment of new provisions regarding sustainable development and corporate social responsibility, and provisions regarding further promotion of freedom of transit. Japan has contributed to the development of the ECT by serving as the chair of the Energy Charter Conference in 2016, the first time for a chair to be from East Asia, and hosting the 27th meeting of the Energy Charter Conference in Tokyo. In addition, HIROSE Atsuko, a Japanese national, has been Deputy Secretary General of the Energy Charter Secretariat, the governing body of the ECT, since September 2021.

(E) Efforts in the Public Relations Field

In March, MOFA held an online seminar on the theme of “Critical Minerals Essential for Clean Energy Transitions.” During the seminar, Director of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Planning and Programme Support Office Elizabeth

Press, and Senior Research Director and Manager of the Global Energy Group 1, Director of the Energy Security Unit at the Institute of Energy Economics, Japan, KUTANI Ichiro delivered keynote speeches. In addition, stakeholders including government officials involved in energy and critical minerals took to the stage as panelists with a lively discussion on efforts required to diversify and strengthen critical mineral supply chains, which are essential for energy transitions.

(2) Ensuring Food Security

A Food Security Situation

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 agri-food systems, causing supply chain destabilization and disruptions. There also exist many challenges to building sustainable and resilient agri-food systems, including how to best use land for food production, conduct agricultural production adapted to climate change, and make efficient use of fertilizers.

According to the 2024 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report,⁽¹⁵⁾ between 713 million and 757 million people worldwide faced hunger in 2023, accounting for one in 11 people worldwide and one in 5 in Africa.

B Diplomatic Efforts to Ensure Food Security

To ensure food security in the international community, MOFA is implementing and building on the following diplomatic efforts.

(A) Cooperation in International Frameworks

At the G7 Apulia Summit in June, Prime Minister Kishida discussed food security in the session on “Artificial Intelligence and Energy / Africa and Mediterranean,” noting that although concrete joint actions, including those taken by invited countries,

⁽¹⁴⁾ 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.

⁽¹⁵⁾ 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 UN (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).

had been agreed upon at the G7 Hiroshima Summit, there are still many countries that continue to require assistance. He stated that it is urgent to establish inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agri-food systems. He also stated that Japan will continue to contribute to food security in Africa by collaborating with the Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils (VACS),⁽¹⁶⁾ a project that focuses on soil health and crops that are resilient to climate change. Attending the G20 Rio de Janeiro Summit in November, Prime Minister Ishiba stated that the principle of human security requires eradicating hunger and poverty and realizing a prosperous society in which everyone can live happily and with respect for human dignity, and that key to achieving this are the aspects of food security and building a sustainable and resilient food system. One of the major outcomes of the summit was the creation of the “Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty,” of which Japan became a member. In June, Japan participated in the “Dialogue on the Food Security Crisis between Food Exporting Countries and Importing Countries” with the International Grains Council (IGC). This dialogue, with broad participation from governments, international organizations, and companies, discussed actions that market participants, including exporting and importing countries, should take in the event of a food security crisis to avoid worsening the crisis, and compiled the results as “The Key Principles of Actions on Food Security Crises for Exporters and Importers.”

(B) Strengthening Cooperation with International Organizations

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, 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 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

⁽¹⁶⁾ Vision for Adaptive Crops and Soils (VACS): This initiative was launched in February 2023 under the leadership of the U.S., the African Union (AU), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO). It aims to build a food system in Africa that will help strengthen food security and nutrition by improving soil health and promoting the production of traditional crops that are highly nutritious and resilient to climate change, with the goal of combating climate change and satisfying increasing food demand. Japan has contributed approximately 6 million U.S. dollars to FAO to support VACS efforts. Under the G7 Italian presidency in 2024, the importance of supporting VACS was also noted in the Leaders' Declaration.

serve as a basis for realizing sustainable utilization and appropriate management of whale stocks.

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing is a serious threat to the sustainable fishing industry. Through international opportunities such as the APEC Leaders' Meeting held in November, Japan has continued to affirm the importance of the international community working together to promote measures against IUU fishing. 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. Japan is also providing capacity building assistance to developing countries for the purpose of countering IUU fishing, including the provision of relevant equipment.

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. At the third meeting of the conference of the parties to the Agreement, held in June 2024, an implementation plan for the Joint Program of Scientific Research and Monitoring for the Central Arctic Ocean was adopted, and discussions were held on formulating 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 establishing 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. Regarding Pacific bluefin tuna, in light of the recovery of resource levels in recent years, an agreement was reached to increase the catch limits for small fish by 10% and for large fish by 50% compared to the previous year at the annual meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) in December. In addition, an increase in the total

allowable catch (TAC) for bigeye tuna was adopted at the annual meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) held in November 2024. As for southern bluefin tuna, the agreement was made at an October meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) to maintain the current TAC based on the recommendation of the Scientific Committee.

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 Osaka in April, an agreement was reached on harvest control rules that automatically calculate total allowable catches for Pacific saury based on its resource levels. Under these rules, the decision was made to reduce the TAC by 10%. For future meetings, it remains important to further improve resource management.

As for Japanese eel, the third scientific meeting on eel was held in June under the leadership of Japan. Scientific knowledge on the management of eel stocks was shared. Also, at the 17th informal consultation on international cooperation held face-to-face in Tokyo in June, Japan, the ROK, China, and Taiwan discussed and confirmed the upper limits of glass eel input into aquaculture ponds, and the four parties concurred on a joint press release about the results of the consultation.

(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 met every year since 2014, is spearheading initiatives to promote activities for discovering and attracting investments. The Council gathers feedback from foreign company managers and takes measures such as regulatory and institutional reforms and support measures that help improve the investment environment in Japan. At its 11th council held in April 2023, the "Action Plan for Attracting Human and Financial Resources from Overseas," compiling 100 measures to promote foreign direct investment in Japan, was formulated. In addition, at its 12th council held in May 2024, 10 measures that should be considered special priority initiatives were formulated as the "Priority Program for Accelerating Foreign Direct Investment in Japan," which is being addressed

across ministries and agencies. The Basic Policy on Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform 2023 and 2024 (Basic Policies 2023 and 2024), which were formulated by the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy and then decided by the Cabinet, also clearly state the target of achieving a balance of 100 trillion yen in foreign direct investment in Japan by 2030 as soon as possible.

MOFA is strategically implementing various initiatives through diplomatic missions overseas based on the measures decided by the Council for Promotion of Foreign Direct Investment in Japan. In FY2023, 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 diplomatic missions overseas, and holding events to promote foreign direct investment in Japan, among other initiatives. More than 750 activities were conducted in FY2023. In June 2023, “FDI Task Forces” were established in five locations (New York, London, Paris, Dusseldorf and Sydney), through collaboration at the level of heads of diplomatic missions overseas 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.

In Japan, MOFA held a Global Business Seminar in January 2024 as a means to widely disseminate information about Japan's business environment from an overseas perspective and Japan's attractiveness as an investment destination. Lectures were given by government and business representatives, along with corporate personnel, and lively discussions were held by the approximately 180 people in attendance, which included representatives of domestic and international companies, embassies in Tokyo, foreign economic organizations and chambers of commerce in Japan, as well as national and local government officials.

(5) The Road to 2025 World Exposition (Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan) and International Horticultural Expo 2027 (GREEN×EXPO 2027)

In preparation for Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, in April 2025, the Government of Japan has been actively calling for participation from many countries, regions, and international organizations, and as of the end of December 2024, more than 160 countries, regions, and international organizations have expressed their intention to participate.

The Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition (JAEX) held International Participants Meetings in June 2024 and January 2025, inviting countries, regions and international organizations planning to participate in the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan to Nara City, Nara Prefecture and Himeji City, Hyogo Prefecture, and providing them with a variety of information for final preparations leading up to the opening of the Expo.

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.” MOFA is also focusing on providing indirect support for each country's preparations for exhibiting through diplomatic missions overseas and diplomatic routes, as well as activities to build momentum overseas via receptions and various events held at these missions. MOFA continues to work closely with relevant ministries and agencies as well as JAEX and make a concerted national effort to ensure the success of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan.

Additionally, in 2027, an international horticultural exposition with the theme “Scenery of the Future for Happiness” will be held in Yokohama. The Expo aims at coexisting with nature such as flowers and greenery and presenting nature-based solutions to global issues including sustainable agriculture, climate change, and decarbonization. MOFA, in cooperation with the Japan Association for the International Horticultural Expo 2027, Yokohama and relevant ministries and agencies, is actively inviting countries and international organizations to participate.

SPECIAL
FEATUREEstablishment of the FDI Task Force to Promote Foreign
Direct Investment in Japan

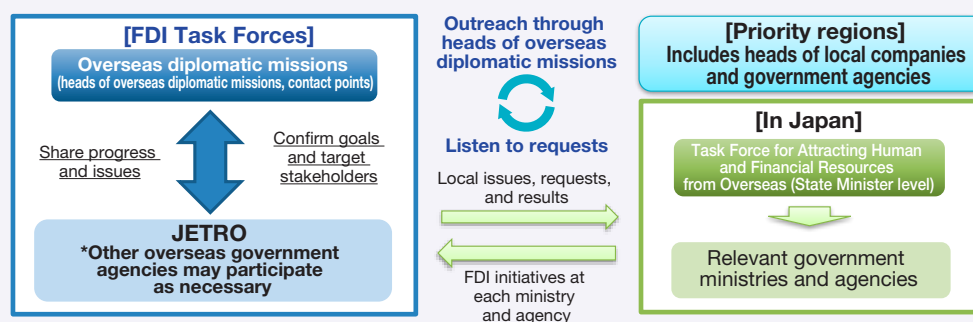
Have you ever heard the term “Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)” in Japan? You may recall the familiar letter “I” from economics class, which stands for “Investment.” This is the same investment that often appears in the IS-LM curve and Keynesian theory. Investment is discussed so frequently because it plays such an important role in the economy.

FDI in Japan follows this same principle, but it’s not just about capital flowing into the country from overseas investment. By effectively attracting talent, companies, and new ideas from overseas, FDI in Japan has the power to increase the competitiveness of the Japanese economy and promote innovation. This is how FDI in Japan makes a significant contribution to the sustainable growth of the Japanese economy.

In its “Basic Policy on Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform 2023” and “Basic Policy on Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform 2024,” the government has set a goal of achieving a balance of 100 trillion yen in FDI in Japan by 2030 as early as possible, and is currently working to promote FDI in Japan through an “All-Japan” effort. 100 trillion yen expressed in numerals is 100,000,000,000,000 yen. This has the same number of digits as the national general account budget for a single fiscal year, but we rarely have the opportunity to see such a large number in everyday life. In the world of sports, the term “100 million-yen-a-year player” is often used, but 100 trillion yen would be enough to hire one million such top athletes! This shows just how much potential FDI in Japan holds. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has established “contact points for promotion of foreign direct investment in Japan” at 126 overseas diplomatic missions and, while making use of this extensive network, is working to collect information that will contribute to the discovery of foreign direct investment opportunities in Japan, and has established a support mechanism for the successful realization of FDI projects in Japan.

In June 2023, “FDI Task Forces” were newly established at five locations: the United States (Consulate General of Japan in New York), the United Kingdom (Embassy of Japan in the UK), Germany (Consulate General of Japan in Düsseldorf), France (Embassy of Japan in France), and Australia (Consulate General of Japan in Sydney) in order to fundamentally strengthen the system to attract foreign direct investment in Japan.

FDI Task Forces are strengthening their engagement with executives of major local companies and relevant government agencies. With a view to promoting investment in Japan, they are working to provide necessary support for overseas companies seeking to expand their business in Japan, while collaborating at the level of heads of diplomatic missions overseas and the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) overseas office.



Overview of FDI Task Force

For example, in June 2024, the Embassy of Japan in the UK, one of the locations where an FDI Task Force was established, held the “Japan-UK Financial Networking Reception.” This was the second such event, following the first one in May 2023. The reception was designed to encourage exchanges between a wide range of financial professionals in the public and private sectors, against the backdrop of growing momentum for further cooperation between Japan and the UK in the financial sector.

These receptions are not just places to exchange business cards; they can become the starting point for new economic cooperation relationships. Ideas and partnerships that will drive future economies are nurtured through such exchanges.

MOFA will continue making every effort to promote FDI in Japan in order to attract people, goods, capital, and ideas from overseas, strengthen the growth potential of the Japanese economy, and create innovation.

Section

4

Efforts to Promote Understanding and Trust in Japan

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 spread of disinformation, is a constant occurrence, as 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.),⁽¹⁾ MOFA responded to them with intensive communication efforts by various efforts such as issuance of press releases denying the disinformation. In April, in order to raise public understanding of the information warfare landscape, including in Japan, MOFA launched a website entitled "The responses to information manipulation, including spread of disinformation," which

provides an overview of MOFA's response and the situation overseas.

In addition, based on the understanding that countries sharing concerns over foreign information manipulation should take concerted action, the United States (U.S.) Japan Memorandum of Cooperation on Countering Foreign Information Manipulation was signed on December 2023, and the two countries are promoting cooperation. Besides, MOFA has also been holding discussions on information manipulation in the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) and bilateral and multilateral 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 about Japan's policies, initiatives, and positions in 2024, in response to the international community becoming increasingly divided and confrontational, such as with the continuing crisis in the Middle East and Russia's protracted

⁽¹⁾ ALPS treated water is water which is processed by devices such as ALPS (Advanced Liquid Processing System) to ensure that the concentration of 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.

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 these perspectives, MOFA invites influential experts and media personnel to Japan from abroad, and arranges opportunities for them to exchange views with various people, including Japanese government officials, 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.⁽²⁾

In order to increase the effectiveness of these communications, it is essential for MOFA to utilize various social media, such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube, as well as 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 been promoting people-to-people and intellectual exchanges, helping to spread the Japanese language, and supporting Japanese studies at universities and research institutes in major countries around the world, and has also been promoting youth exchanges between Japan and other countries and regions through programs such as "Japan's Friendship Ties Programs."

(2) Reference materials concerning the Rising Sun Flag are available on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here: (1)

(1) https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page22e_000892.html

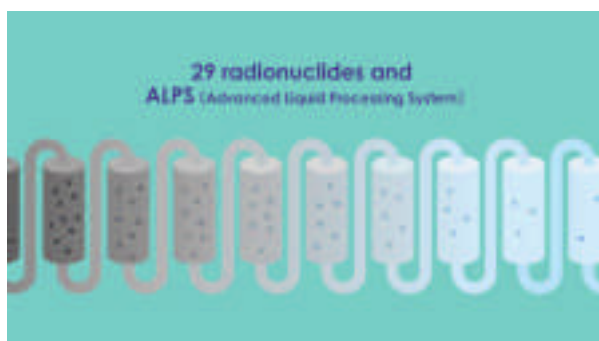
(2) Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9co0U5lcE0c>

"Rising Sun Flag as Japanese Longstanding Culture" (Posted on MOFA's YouTube channel from October 8, 2021)





Social media used by MOFA



Policy promotion video, "29 Radionuclides and ALPS"
(Posted on MOFA's YouTube official channel
from July 13, 2023)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGnbpLbjw4w>



Through these initiatives, MOFA will continue to make even further efforts with the aim of expanding interest in, understanding of, and support for Japan.

(3) JAPAN HOUSE

MOFA has established JAPAN HOUSE overseas communication hubs in three cities, namely Sao Paulo (Brazil), London (UK) and Los Angeles (U.S.). The purpose is to attract a wide range of people, including those who know very little about Japan and to enlarge the base of people who are interested and well-versed in 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 know how 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. 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. By the end of December 2024, the total number of visitors for the three hubs had exceeded 7.14 million, indicating that the hubs are becoming firmly established as a major cultural facility in each city. In May, Prime Minister Kishida visited Japan House São Paulo.

(4) Media Coverage of Japan in Other Countries and Regions, and Dissemination to Foreign Media

In 2024, foreign media coverage of Japan was centered on diplomatic issues such as Prime Minister Kishida's official visit to the U.S., the formation of the Ishiba Cabinet and his subsequent overseas visits, the situation surrounding Israel and Palestine, the situation in Ukraine, Japan-China relations, Japan-Republic of Korea (ROK) relations, and the issues concerning North Korea, as well as Japan's efforts to strengthen its defense capabilities, exchange rate fluctuations, and Japanese companies' investment projects in the U.S., 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.

2024 was a year in which Japan's diplomacy attracted a great deal of attention from the international community, such as Prime Minister Kishida's official visit to the U.S., a Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit being held for the first time in about four and a half years, and the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM10) and the TICAD Ministerial Meeting being held in Tokyo. The Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers also frequently visited foreign countries and actively communicated with overseas media through contributions and interviews. For example, Prime Minister Kishida was interviewed by major European and American newspapers, including the Washington Post in the U.S., and also appeared live on the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in the U.S. and spoke with CNN. After assuming the office of Prime Minister, Prime Minister Ishiba made his first overseas visits, attending the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-related Summit Meetings (Laos) in October, and then the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting (Peru) and the G20 Rio de Janeiro Summit (Brazil) in November; in each of these countries that he visited, Prime Minister Ishiba contributed articles to major newspapers in order to communicate Japan's position at each summit and the significance of the bilateral relationship between Japan and the country he visited.

In 2024, the Prime Minister contributed articles and held interviews 28 times, and the Foreign Minister

contributed articles and held interviews for a total of 43 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, in 2024, 11 invitation programs were provided, and 23 journalists from 20 countries participated in the project.

(5) Information Provision Through the Internet

MOFA has been actively engaged in providing information through various social media and the MOFA website, including by also opening a new official Instagram account in 2023, in order to increase understanding and support of Japan's foreign policy from people both inside and outside of Japan. In addition to livestreaming the regular press conferences by the Foreign Minister (in Japanese and English), MOFA also promptly and proactively communicated information about domestic and international diplomatic events, the situation in Ukraine, the situation in Gaza, the ALPS treated water, and other topics. Moreover, since February 2024, MOFA has been posting short vertical videos on social media about diplomatic events both in Japan and abroad in which the Foreign Minister is involved. MOFA also places importance on using videos to communicate diplomatic policy, such as by personally delivering messages by the Foreign Minister.

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, 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.

In order to carry on the legacy of Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic 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 is also providing 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, the U.S. and other regions; 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 these kinds of perspectives, 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 and JF.

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. 2024 marks the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Türkiye, the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Palau, Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024, the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and North Macedonia, and the 60th anniversary of the



100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Türkiye (December 5 to 9, Istanbul, Türkiye)



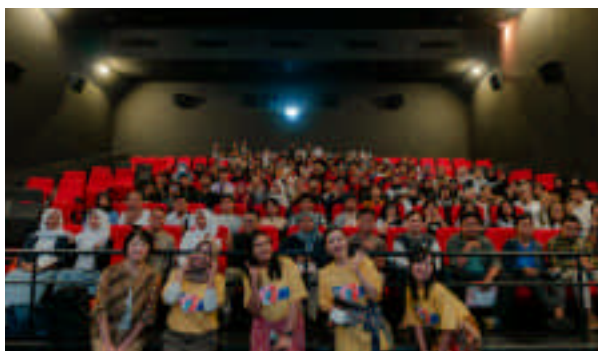
KENZO TANGE – KENGO KUMA Exhibition (May 2 to June 29, Paris, France; Photo: The Japan Foundation)



Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year 2024 (May 3, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago)



Butoh dance company Sankai Juku performance in Istanbul (October 24 to 25, Istanbul, Türkiye; ©Yoichiro Yoshikawa)



Japanese Film Festival (December 14, Yogyakarta, Indonesia; Photo: The Japan Foundation)



Japan International MANGA Award Ceremony (March 5, Tokyo)

establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Zambia, and a series of large-scale cultural events were held in commemoration.

JF also leverages its overseas centers and, in collaboration with Japan's diplomatic missions overseas, develops and implements cultural and artistic exchange programs with partner countries.

In 2024, numerous commemorative events were held to mark the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Türkiye, including an installation exhibition by artist Chiharu Shiota at the Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, a performance by the Butoh dance company Sankai Juku at the Istanbul Theatre Festival, and the opening screening of an animated work on the Great East Japan Earthquake at the Ankara Japanese Film Festival. Meanwhile, the Japan Cultural Institute in Paris presented a range of projects in conjunction with the Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games, including the exhibition “KENZO TANGE – KENGO KUMA – Architects of the Tokyo Games,” which showcased the designers of Tokyo's Olympic venues, thereby serving as a hub for Japanese cultural outreach related to the Olympics and Paralympics. At the annual 2024 National Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D.C., the opening ceremony featured performances by folk singer MORIYAMA Naotaro, choreographer KANAMORI Jo, and musician Kaoru Watanabe. Alongside these overseas events, MOFA has also been actively working to expand its online cultural outreach. In August 2024 it launched “JFF Theater,” a new streaming platform for distributing Japanese video content, mainly movies, with multilingual subtitles, and over the following four months the platform presented a total of 15 titles.

Additionally, after being announced at the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation in December 2023, the “Partnership to Co-create a Future with the Next Generation: WA Project 2.0” was also launched. This is a people-to-people exchange program that will be intensively implemented by JF over the 10-year period from 2024 to 2033 between Japan and ASEAN countries, with the two-pillar projects of “Two-way Intellectual and Cultural Exchange” and “NIHONGO Partners.” In 2024, the first year of the program, while building

the foundations of the program through system design and pilot project trials, the Japanese Film Festival (JFF) was also held in Southeast Asian countries, screening a wide variety of films, mainly new and recent releases, with the aim of spreading interest in Japanese culture and society and fostering momentum for Japanese language learning.

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 18th Japan International MANGA Award, held in 2024, received a record-high 716 entries from 95 countries and regions; the Gold Award was presented to a work from Brazil, and Silver Awards were presented to works from Thailand, Taiwan and Chile. In addition, this year there were entries for the first time from seven countries: Yemen, Dominica, Namibia, Barbados, Laos, Luxembourg and Equatorial Guinea.

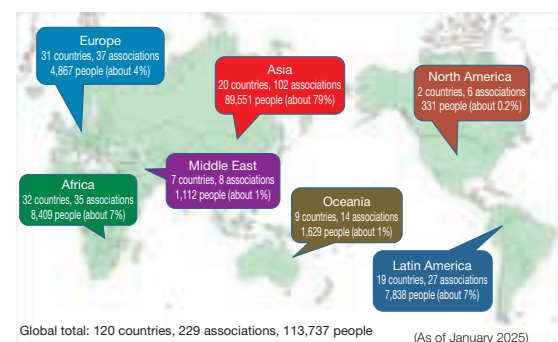
(3) People-to-People Exchange and Exchanges in the Area of Education and Sports

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 nationals 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 international students

Japan Alumni Associations and members by region



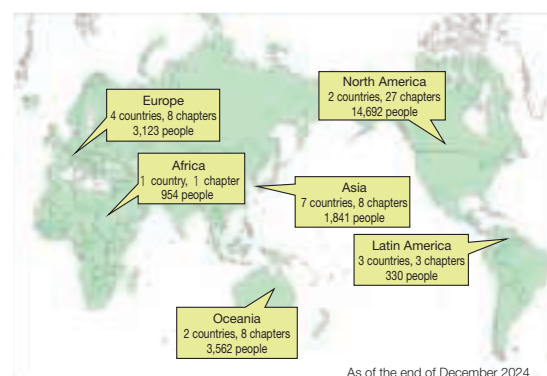
who have returned to their home countries through Japan Alumni Associations and to expand interest in, understanding of, and support for Japan. In March, the fourth Japan Alumni Conference was held in a hybrid format following the event held in the previous year. At the Conference, participants gave 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 50 fellows of the second cohort (10 from each of Japan, India, Australia, and the U.S., and 10 from the ASEAN region) began their studies in the U.S., bringing the total number of participants to 150.

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).

JET Alumni Association Chapters and members



2024 JETAA USA National Conference participants (September 27 to 29, St. Paul, U.S.)

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 and has about 25,000 members. In FY 2024, 5,861 participants from 51 countries, including 2,006 new participants, were dispatched to all parts of Japan, and more than about 79,000 people have participated in the JET Programme to date as of July 1, 2024. 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



Projects for Sports Diplomacy Enhancement: Handover ceremony of badminton equipment to Botswana (November 20, Botswana)

relations and a better understanding of Japan. Under the “Projects for Sports Diplomacy Enhancement” 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, striving to seek and cultivate future generations with great affinity toward or knowledge of Japan, and working to strengthen the spread of information about Japan from overseas. In 2024, about 2,500 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



Participants in the JENESYS2024 ASEAN-Japan Students Conference paid a courtesy call on Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs IKUINA Akiko (January 15, 2025, Tokyo)



Participants in the KAKEHASHI Project Japanese American youth invitation program visit the Japanese Overseas Migration Museum (December 17, Kanagawa Prefecture; Photo: Japan International Cooperation Center)



JENESYS2024 ASEAN-Japan Sports x SDGs Exchange for Youths (October 31, Fukushima Prefecture; Photo: Japan International Cooperation Center)

contributed to promoting understanding 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 on social media. In addition, 95 follow-up programs, such as alumni reunions and online Japan revisits, have

been held for alumni of these programs, thereby continuing to foster strong networks and to promote an even deeper understanding of Japan's relations with

other countries and regions in their respective areas of interest.

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International Exchanges through the “Projects for Sports Diplomacy Enhancement” Scheme

■ The Olympic and Paralympic Baton Passed from Tokyo to Paris

In the summer of 2024, the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games (Paris Games) were held in France. Previously, the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo (Tokyo Games) were held in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the athletes' bold and courageous performances amid so many restrictions and constraints inspired hopes and dreams. Three years have passed since then, and in Paris, which received the baton from Tokyo, the Olympic and Paralympic Games were held with spectators being welcomed back, and the athletes' great performances, cheered on by live crowds, were broadcast to the world.

■ Projects for Sports Diplomacy Enhancement: Support for Transport of Sports Equipment

At the Paris Games, 207 countries and regions took part in the Olympics and 167 took part in the Paralympics. One of the initiatives behind the scenes that supports the development of sports in various countries is the “Projects for Sports Diplomacy Enhancement” scheme, promoted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). This project was launched in 2015 to build momentum for the Tokyo Games, and involves inviting and dispatching athletes and coaches, and supporting the transport of sports equipment. Some athletes who visited Japan through this project have continued to play an active role and participated in the Paris Games.

Currently, MOFA is continuing its “Support for Transport of Sports Equipment” initiative, in which it provides financial support for the international transport costs of sports equipment donated by supervisory sports organizations in Japan to overseas supervisory sports organizations. Under this framework, a variety of sports equipment has been delivered to a total of 66 countries over the past 10 years.

Many countries and regions face shortages of sports equipment, and donations of equipment from Japan are greatly appreciated by a wide range of people, including local sports-related officials, youth, and government representatives alike. Such support contributes not only to the development of sports locally, but also to good bilateral relationships with Japan and to promoting international exchanges at the grassroots level through sports.

In 2024 as well, Japan continued to donate sports equipment to various countries and regions. In June, on the occasion of State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUJI Kiyoto's visit to Tajikistan, football wear donated by the Japan Football Association was handed over to the Tajikistan Football Federation. Expressions of gratitude have also been received from sports organizations of other countries that benefited from these donations, and the following is a selection of their comments:

Colombia Badminton Federation

(Badminton equipment donated by the Badminton Association of Japan)

We are extremely grateful for this support from the people of Japan to improve the sports environment for children, women, and athletes, and to develop culture. It is a great honor for our Federation to have this opportunity and to have forged such a strong bond with the Badminton Association of Japan. We will make the most of this support, which is truly needed by many young people and citizens.



Handover ceremony of badminton equipment to Colombia
(February 27, Colombia)

Shooting Association of Maldives

(Rifle shooting coats and uniforms donated by the Japan Rifle Shooting Sport Federation)

Shooting sports in the Maldives are still developing. This donation lays a foundation for their development and symbolizes the friendship and cooperative relationship between the Maldives and Japan. On behalf of the Shooting Association of Maldives, I would like to express my deep gratitude for the donation of the shooting coats and uniforms. Japan's continuous assistance and support have played a vital role in the development of the Maldives. I am confident that this donation will be a step toward further strengthening the friendship and strong ties between the two countries.



Handover ceremony of rifle shooting coats and uniforms to the Maldives (May 16, Maldives)

(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 2024, JF's Japanese Studies Fellowship Program provided 86 researchers with the opportunity to visit Japan for research. As part of the "Partnership to Co-create a Future with the Next Generation: WA Project 2.0" project and with the aim of establishing an ecosystem to continuously produce and nurture Japanese studies specialists, particularly those from ASEAN countries, in collaboration with the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia at the University of Tokyo and the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, JF co-hosted a series of networking events held in Tokyo (November) and Kyoto (December) that were organized to provide opportunities, particularly for researchers, to form and strengthen their networks.



Networking event held at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (December 20, Kyoto Prefecture; Photo: The Japan Foundation)

JF also dispensed grants for expanding Japanese studies faculty members, for organizing seminars and symposiums, dispatch of visiting professors, and for expanding the collection of books on Japan to a total of 45 institutions of Japanese studies in 25 countries and regions in 2024. 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

Through JF, MOFA 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 exchanges by dispatching or inviting prominent cultural figures and other guests. It planned, implemented, and supported exchange projects that contribute to promoting dialogue at various levels, human resource development, and the establishment of interpersonal networks. These include the implementation of the Japan Outreach Initiative (JOI) program, which dispatches Japanese coordinators to the U.S. with a view to deepening interest in and understanding of Japan at the grassroots level in the U.S.

In 2024, following on from the previous year, the Japan Foundation Indo-Pacific Partnership Program



Roundtable discussion with Ukrainian poet Ostap Slyvynsky (January 19, Tokyo; Photo: The Japan Foundation)

(JFIPP) was implemented, in which experts and practitioners from the region tackle common issues in order to develop human resources who can contribute to the realization of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP),” with a total of 78 people participating. In addition, Ukrainian poet Ostap Slyvynsky was invited to Japan in January, and roundtable discussions and dialogue events were held with Japanese cultural figures and others in various regions. Overseas, cultural anthropologist and manga artist TSURU Daisaku and manga artist SUMIYOSHI Ryo were dispatched to Peru, Brazil, and Mexico, where they held dialogue events with researchers and creators from various regions on the theme of worldviews and character designs in Japanese manga and anime creations, attracting a total of more than 1,200 participants. Additionally, as part of the “Partnership to Co-create a Future with the Next Generation: WA Project 2.0,” JF invited a total of 55 teachers from secondary education institutions in ASEAN countries to Japan, and implemented programs such as school visits, opinion exchanges with Japanese teachers, experiences in Japanese culture, and on-site tours of Japan’s efforts to address global issues. It is hoped that these programs will deepen the participants’ understanding of and affinity for Japan, and that they will be able to apply the results of their experiences to their own educational settings after returning home.

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. In February, March, August and December, its two Working Groups, “Information Access and Sharing in the Digital Age (IAS)” and “Subnational Diplomacy / Local & Regional Exchange (SND),” each convened meetings, with members from both countries deepening their discussions in preparation for their final report by the end of fiscal year 2025.

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 in 2025 UNU celebrated its 50th anniversary. Japan provides a variety of cooperation and support to UNU. In July, MOFA co-hosted with UNU the event “Dialogue with the Youths: Toward the Summit of the Future” at UNU’s headquarters, where Foreign Minister Kamikawa and UNU Rector Tshilidzi Marwala jointly engaged Japanese and international youth in discussions on their visions of prosperity to pursue and on the meaningful participation of youth in decision-making for global initiatives. In August, Rector Marwala delivered the keynote address at Session 1 (Society: “Realizing a Sustainable Future”) of the TICAD Ministerial Meeting and served as moderator for the thematic panel discussion “Innovation in Africa.”

In addition, UNU Senior Vice-Rector and UN Assistant Secretary-General SHIRAHASE Sawako, is helping to promote discussion on SDGs through the BIG IDEAS dialogue series and other initiatives.



“Dialogue with the Youths: Toward the Summit of the Future” event (July 22, 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 global popularity, interest in the Japanese language is growing around the world, especially overseas 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 (JLPT) 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 2024 reaching a record high of about 1.72 million.

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. As a major pillar of the "Partnership to Co-create a Future with the Next Generation: WA Project 2.0" initiative, JF dispatches NIHONGO Partners to support Japanese-language instruction at secondary schools and similar institutions across ASEAN countries and beyond. In

2024, a total of 285 NIHONGO Partners were dispatched to ten countries. Additionally, 49 teachers and 77 students from host institutions were invited to Japan for training opportunities. 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 Japan Foundation Test for Basic Japanese (JFT-Basic), which assesses the Japanese language ability of foreign nationals who come to Japan (by the end of 2024, a total of about 310,000 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

As part of the Official Development Assistance (ODA), the Government of Japan provides Cultural Grant Assistance to support the purchase of materials and equipment and the development of facilities to be used for the promotion of culture, sports, and higher education, as well as the conservation of cultural heritage in developing countries, thereby enhancing mutual understanding and friendly relations between Japan and these countries. In 2024, the Government of Japan has funded three General Cultural Grant Assistance projects (totaling 372.7 million Japanese yen) and 17 Grant Assistance for Cultural Grassroots Projects (totaling 153.34 million Japanese yen). Specifically, the General Cultural Grant Assistance projects provided equipment to Egypt, Mongolia, and Senegal to support educational activities as well as to promote and develop *judo*. The Grant Assistance for Cultural Grassroots Projects focused primarily on cooperation in the field of promoting sports, particularly Japanese martial arts (*budo*), and Japanese language education.

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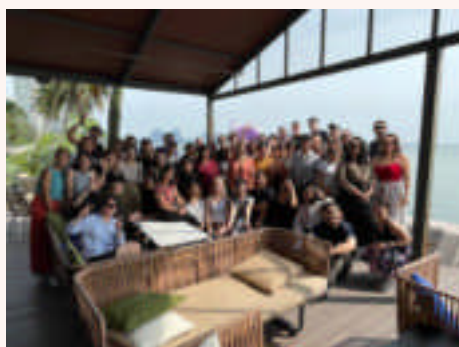
Breathing New Life into the Future through Asian Resonance — Launch of the “Partnership to Co-create a Future with the Next Generation: WA Project 2.0”

The Japan Foundation (JF) has launched a 10-year initiative from 2024 to 2033 that intensively implements various exchange programs across Asian countries and regions, particularly among the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), in the fields of Japanese language education, culture and art, Japanese studies, international dialogue, and others. Named the “Partnership to Co-create a Future with the Next Generation: WA Project 2.0,” this project succeeds the “WA Project: Toward Interactive Asia through Fusion and Harmony,” which ran from 2014 to 2023. Through sustained people-to-people exchanges and human resources development among the next generation in Asian countries and Japan, this initiative aims to forge relationships for co-creating the future.

One of the pillars of this project is the continuation of the “NIHONGO Partners” program, in which Japanese nationals are dispatched to secondary schools and other institutions across Asian countries and regions to serve as partners for local Japanese language teachers and students, supporting Japanese language classes and introducing Japanese culture. There has been a great deal of positive feedback from host communities: “Having the opportunity to directly speak and interact with a native Japanese speaker sparked my curiosity about them and strengthened my desire to study Japanese more.” JF has also heard feedback from the NIHONGO Partners themselves who are active in various regions: “I feel as though I have found a second home,” and “I want to become a goodwill ambassador between our two countries.” These responses attest to the success in cultivating individuals who can act as bridge-builders on both sides of the relationship.



Sushi-making experience planned by NIHONGO Partners (June, Penang, Malaysia; Photo: The Japan Foundation)



Group photo of APP Camp participants (July, Penang, Malaysia; Photo: Producers Connect Japan (PCJ))



Participants in the “ASEAN-Japan Exchange Program for Secondary School Educators” visiting the Awa Odori Kaikan (November, Tokushima City, Tokushima Prefecture; Photo: The Japan Foundation)

Under WA Project 2.0 and in order to deepen interest in the Japanese language and in Japan, JF will further enhance the initiatives, including full-scale cultural events at schools that NIHONGO Partners are dispatched to and invitations for local teachers and students to visit Japan.

Exchanges in cultural and artistic fields have also begun. In July, Japanese performing arts professionals were dispatched to the Asian Producers’ Platform Camp (APP Camp)¹ held in Malaysia. As one participant noted, “The trust built through living together and discussing with producers from across the countries and regions is something that could not have been achieved elsewhere,” which underscores how the active interactions and exchanges of views among attendees from various Asian countries seemed to be an excellent stimulus, the event provided a place to build networks that can lead to future collaborations. In October, coinciding with Tokyo International Film Festival, JF invited eight film programmers who are actively working in Southeast Asian countries, thereby providing them with an opportunity to deepen their knowledge of Japanese films and to build personal connections. After returning home, they plan to organize screenings of Japanese films by themselves in their respective countries, and the future responses to those films from each region are eagerly anticipated.

The ASEAN-Japan Exchange Program for Secondary School Educators is one of the newly launched programs, in which teachers from junior and senior high schools in ASEAN states are invited to

Japan to deepen their understanding of topics including Japanese education through activities including visits to regional schools. In November 2024, the first year of the program, JF invited 26 school principals and educational administrators, as well as 29 social studies teachers. Encouraged by comments from participating teachers such as “I hope that more participants will have the same experience as I had,” JF will continue to refine the program to meet such expectations.

From 2025 onward, JF has planned an even broader array of exchange programs. As the circle of exchanges from the WA Project 2.0 continues to expand between Japan and Asian countries and regions, including ASEAN, toward 10 years later in 2033, it will be exciting to see the new futures that emerge.

¹ The Asian Producers' Platform is a platform started in 2014 with the aim of deepening networking among performing arts producers and creators in the Asia-Pacific region. At the APP Camp, held once a year by APP, participants from each country can deepen their networks, foster relationships of trust, and improve their own abilities by staying together about a week.

(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 State 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. 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 is also providing support for the development of conservation and management plans for heritage sites, as well as for their preservation and restoration. Furthermore, Japan continues to provide support through UNESCO to Ukraine's cultural and education sectors, which are facing significant difficulties. In June, Parliamentary

Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs KOMURA Masahiro attended the “Towards the recovery of the culture sector of Ukraine” international conference, which was hosted by the Government of Lithuania with the cooperation of UNESCO and the Government of Ukraine, and emphasized the need for solidarity among the international community for the reconstruction of Ukraine. 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 to projects involving the development of domestic institutions and capacity building for relevant parties to enhance countries' ability to safeguard intangible cultural heritage by themselves.

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. In February, Foreign Minister Kamikawa, who attended the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting (Brazil), met with Director-General Azoulay and concurred to continue cooperating on various issues at UNESCO, including safeguarding culture in the areas of conflict. Japan will continue to contribute proactively to the activities of UNESCO

that are being promoted under the leadership of Director-General Azoulay.

A World Heritage Convention

The World Heritage Convention aims to protect cultural heritage and natural heritage internationally as heritage belonging to all mankind. Japan concluded the Convention in 1992 (as of December 2024, the number of States Parties to the Convention is 196). 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 December 2024, a total of 1,223 World Heritage Sites are included on the World Heritage List, including 26 heritage sites (21 cultural heritage sites and five natural heritage sites) in Japan. The 46th session of the World Heritage Committee was held in July 2024 in New Delhi, the capital of India.

At the July 2024 meeting, the “Sado Island Gold Mines” (Niigata Prefecture) were inscribed as a World Heritage Site by consensus of all Members States of the World Heritage Committee.

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 2024, the number of States Parties to the Convention is 183). Japan, with abundant experience in safeguarding domestic intangible cultural properties, served as the chair of the inter-governmental working group reviewing the operational mechanism of this Convention, and leads discussions by incorporating requests from developing countries. In December 2024, it was decided that “Traditional knowledge and skills of sake-making with koji mold in Japan,” proposed by Japan, would be included in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity created under the Convention, bringing

the total number of items inscribed under the register from Japan to 23. Currently, proposals have been submitted to the UNESCO Secretariat as a new nomination, “Shodo: Calligraphy in Japan” and for inscriptions on an extended basis, “Washi, craftsmanship of traditional Japanese hand-made paper,” “Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan,” and “Traditional skills, techniques and knowledge for the conservation and transmission of wooden architecture in Japan.”

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. Of these, according to the UNESCO website, as of December 2024, 496 items have been inscribed under the international register.

The fact that the governments of 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 over which Member States have conflicting views 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 of the same year, and in May 2023, new inscriptions of 64 items were decided, including the “The Monk Enchin Archives: A History of Japan-China Cultural Exchange” (nominators: Onjo-ji Temple and Tokyo National Museum), nominated by Japan.

Chapter 4

Japan's Diplomacy Open to the Public

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Section

1

Japanese Society and People Deepening Their Ties with the World

1 Japan's Growth and Acceptance of Foreign Nationals

(1) Rapid recovery in the number of international visitors to Japan 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 travelers to Japan in 2020 and 60 million in 2030. In the wake of the significant decrease in the number of inbound international travelers during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Japan formulated the “4th Tourism Nation Promotion Basic Plan,” in March 2023, followed by formulation of the “Action Plan for Expanding Inbound Tourism for the New Era” in May the same year. These Plans set new targets, including of attracting 32 million inbound international travelers or more by 2025. In 2024, the number of international visitors reached around 37 million, which is about 5 million more than the 31.88 million in 2019 - before the pandemic - and representing a new record high.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has relaxed visa requirements for short-term stays from the perspectives of promoting inbound tourism as well as people-to-people exchange with various countries. Visa exemption arrangements for Panama were introduced on April 1, followed by the relaxation of multiple entry visa requirements for the Philippines on June 10 and Ukraine on June 24. Moreover, MOFA has introduced a new Working Holiday Programme with Luxembourg. As of the end of December 2024, Japan has taken measures on visa exemption arrangements for ordinary passport holders for 71 countries/regions.

When considering the relaxation of visa requirements, 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 consider visa policies

with a comprehensive view of bilateral relations and the significance for diplomacy, with the aim of contributing to the promotion of Japan as a tourism-oriented country in terms of both quality and quantity while maintaining the safety and security of society for which Japan is world-renowned.

(2) Accepting Foreign Human Resources and Their Social Integration

In response to the severe labor shortage in Japan as well as the intensifying international competition for attracting human resources in recent years, MOFA has liaised with related ministries and agencies on initiatives regarding accepting foreign human resources and improving its environment. The “Specified Skilled Worker” system was established in April 2019. MOFA, as one of the related organizations 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 local languages of the major countries of origin of the workers. In 2024, a law amendment took place to establish the new Employment for Skill Development Program to replace the existing Technical Intern Training Program. As one of the related organizations, MOFA will work in collaboration with related ministries and agencies toward the implementation of the Employment for Skill Development program in 2027.

Furthermore, MOFA has been advancing related initiatives in accordance with the “Roadmap for the Realization of a Society of Harmonious Coexistence with Foreign Nationals” formulated by the “Ministerial

Council on Acceptance and Inclusion of Foreign Human Resources,” among others. As one such initiative, 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 discussion among the people on 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. 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, 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 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.

With the aim of 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 international organizations and make a contribution on the global stage. Currently, 958 Japanese nationals (as of the end of 2023; figures gathered by MOFA) are working as professional-level or higher-level staff in UN-related agencies around the world. In order to increase the number of Japanese personnel, MOFA runs the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme (See the Column on page 332.), which sends young Japanese

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The 50th Anniversary of the JPO Dispatch Programme

In the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme, international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) accept young personnel funded by their respective national governments. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) began dispatching Japanese nationals under this scheme in 1974, with 2024 marking the 50th anniversary of MOFA's engagement. A total of more than 2,000 people have participated to date, and around half of the Japanese nationals currently active at international organizations are former JPOs. They are active around the world as the "face of Japan," addressing cross-border issues. This column introduces the experiences of former JPOs currently active at the UN as the "face of Japan." Through programs such as the JPO Programme, MOFA will continue to support as many Japanese nationals as possible to play an active role at international organizations.

■ Voice of a Former JPO

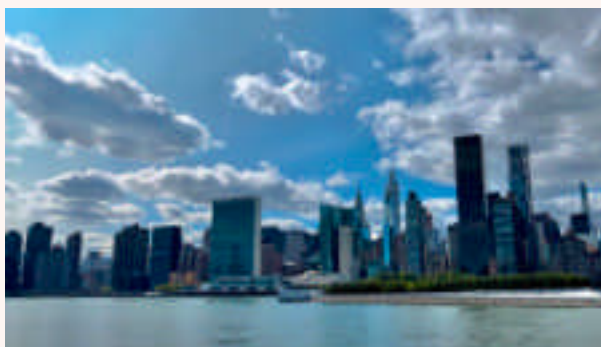
My Calling: From a R&D Professional for a Domestic Venture Firm to a UN Administrative Officer

TANIMOTO Akiko, Administrative Officer, Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance (DMSPC), UN Secretariat

After working in Human Resources (HR) software research and development for a venture firm in Japan, I looked to change specializations, enrolling in graduate school. As part of the curriculum, I visited the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Myanmar office, and realized for the first time there are fields overseas where I could make the most of my skills and experiences. This marked a turning point for me. While visiting UN organizations, I happened to meet and introduce myself to an HR Officer, who said "we would like to have you here, even as an intern." Based on this frank offer, I decided to aim for HR work at the UN. After interning at a capability development project at the JICA Timor-Leste Office, and experiences in the HR departments of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) headquarters in Paris and the UN University (UNU), I applied to be a JPO. I was dispatched to serve as an administrative officer in charge of HR at the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance (DMSPC) at the UN Secretariat headquarters (New York).

As the name suggests, DMSPC is a department that aims to ensure compliance with the UN's management strategies and policies. I am involved with the overall HR field management in the Executive Division of the Under-Secretary-General's Office. All of the work I am involved with, including recruitment, is very delicate, a lot of it is very tricky, and the workload was overwhelming to begin with. However, I was blessed with supportive supervisors and colleagues, and I have come to feel that I am suited to this work, which is very motivating. I was appointed as a permanent officer from September 2024, and I enjoy the challenges I work on every day.

In the beginning I had never thought about working at the UN and had never studied abroad. In that sense, I feel I was as far from the UN as possible. Because of that, I was often confused by differences in organizational culture while also struggling with my lack of international experience and intuition, which was mentally draining. While I was at the UNESCO HR department, a colleague said to me that "your career is something that just happens." Often you don't realize what sort of work or environment you are suited for, and you don't always have the chance to do the work you want at the timing you hope for. Despite that, looking back I feel that by valuing the opportunities that come each day and helping myself grow, I likely came across the work which I believe is my calling. I hope to keep contributing to the development of the HR field in order to create a society in which everyone around the world – including, of course, at the UN – can work with motivation and fulfillment every day.



The view commuting from the ferry. This angle shows the UN Headquarters buildings clearly.

■ From JPO to the Center of the UN Stage

Between a Rock and a Hard Place – Ideal and Reality

ITO Ayaki, Director of UNHCR's Division of Emergency, Security and Supply, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)¹

In 1993, I was dispatched as a JPO to the UNHCR field office in Maungdaw, a small town located on the border of Myanmar and Bangladesh. It took two days to reach Maungdaw from Yangon, Myanmar's former capital, by plane, boat, and four-wheel drive vehicle, and it was the first time that UNHCR international staff had been stationed there. It was an important period of time then, as Rohingya refugees² who had fled to Bangladesh had begun returning to Myanmar. I used off-road motorcycles and boats to visit villages, checking on the situation of the returnees and spending extended periods negotiating with the local authorities to address issues. In the beginning, I wasn't fully confident with the assignment in field operation, but I was very fortunate to have inspiring supervisors and colleagues, and the experiences I had during those two years built the foundation for my career to come.

30 years later, I have been transferred 14 times to 10 different countries. Today, there are around 123 million people³ worldwide who have been forced to flee their homes, including refugees and internally displaced persons. Another approximately 4.4 million people live as stateless persons with no nationality. The mandate of UNHCR is to protect and support them through its network of more than 500 field offices across around 135 countries.³ Based on the principle of the "field-based approach" advocated by former High Commissioner of UNHCR, OGATA Sadako, over 90%³ of our officials are active in the field, working through direct engagement with the affected people. International staff operate under a rotation system, in which they are required to transfer every two to five years. Around 90 Japanese staff members³ are active in this system, over 70%³ of whom are women. Many of them came through the JPO Programme to become UNHCR staff.

Many refugees and internally displaced persons have been forced to flee their homes due to persecution, human rights violations, and conflicts. Their numbers have been increasing for 13 consecutive years since 2011.³ Fundamental political settlements in their home countries are essential for them to return in safety, but as turmoil in the international community worsens, achieving them is no simple task. While supporting countries receiving refugees, UNHCR also focuses on improving the situation in their home countries. While serving as UNHCR Representative in Syria and Lebanon, I was engaged in creating an environment for voluntary repatriation in safety for Syrian refugees through relief items and legal support. At the same time, as prejudice and hostility toward refugees were growing in Lebanon, we also listened to the concerns of people in the host country, striving to protect the rights of refugees while maintaining a balance. Moreover, in today's world where we face unpredictable issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the ability to handle complex situations in which there may not always be a universal "correct answer" is required. In other words, I believe that UNHCR staff need the ability to implement effective refugee support and protection between reality and ideals.

To that end, UNHCR staff must listen seriously to what refugees say, identify the essence of the issues, understand the perspectives of diverse stakeholders, quickly make decisions, and take action on the front line. This remains a core principle that guides my work to this day.

I truly hope that more and more Japanese nationals will take their first step on the international stage through the JPO Programme and contribute to global peace and humanitarian efforts.



The author (right) hearing from refugees who returned to their villages deep in the mountains of Kayah State, Myanmar, on the Thailand border (2013 ©UNHCR/Jane Gabriel Holloway)



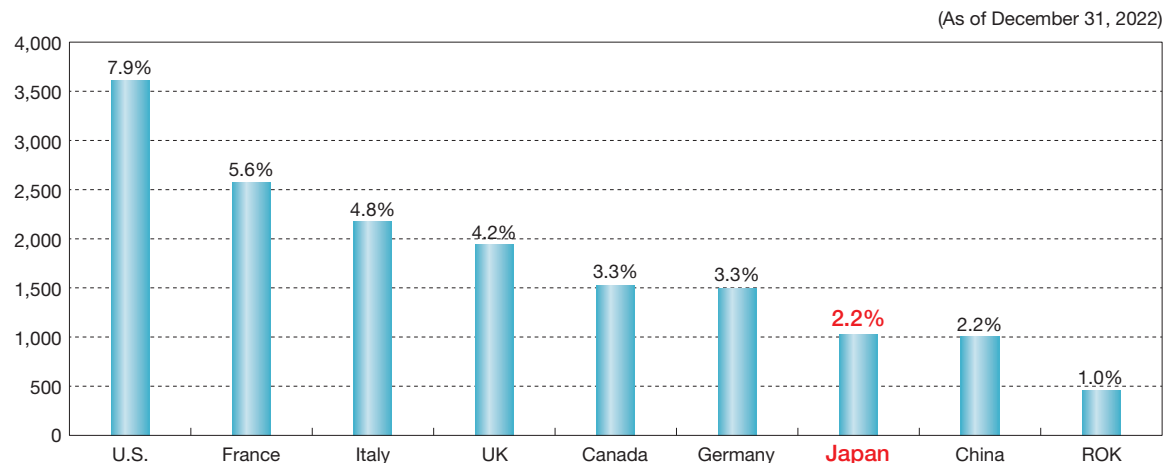
The author (right) working in a camp for internally displaced persons in Mogadishu, capital of Somalia (2012)

¹ The official title is as of January 2025

² Refugees from Rakhine State, Myanmar

³ The official figures are as of January 2025

■ Number of Staff Members at UN-related Agencies by Nationality (professional or higher)



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)

nationals who wish to work for international organizations 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 level professional experience. In addition to encouraging the employment of more Japanese nationals through these initiatives, MOFA is 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), LinkedIn, and Instagram, as well as video sharing platforms such as YouTube. The Center also focuses on providing assistance regarding application. In addition, the Center works on publicity through holding seminars explaining the attractiveness of working at international organizations and methods to apply for a job, and also online and in-person 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

As leaders in undertaking Japan's "visible development cooperation," Japanese NGOs ascertain in detail what is needed on the front lines of development as well as provide rapid and flexible support in accordance with each circumstance. They are therefore strategic partners in implementing Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Through NGOs, MOFA actively provides 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., basic education, inclusive education, school construction), disaster risk reduction, and countermeasures for landmines and unexploded ordnances (UXO). In FY2023, MOFA provided funding for 109 projects to Japanese NGOs (62 organizations) implementing Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects in 39 countries and 1 region 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.

In addition, the Japan Platform (JPF) — which was established in 2000 through cooperation and partnership between the government, NGOs, and business communities to provide more effective and rapid emergency humanitarian assistance in the event of large-scale natural disasters and conflicts — has 47 NGO members as of December 2024. In 2024, JPF launched programs such as providing assistance to victims of the Southeast Asia floods and the floods in eastern Bangladesh. In addition, JPF provided support 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.

MOFA provides 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 2024, MOFA implemented four programs to improve the environment for NGO activities: the “NGO Consultant Scheme” (See the Special Feature on page 336.), “NGO Study Program,” “NGO Intern Program,” and “NGO Study Group.”

The FY2023 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 August 2023. As the two sub-committees, Meetings of the Partnership Promotion Committee were held in July and December the same year and March 2024, while ODA Policy Council meetings were held in July and

December 2023 and March 2024, all of which saw lively exchanges of views.

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. Through the commissioned projects known as the “Special Communicator for a World without Nuclear Weapons” and the “Youth Communicator for a World without Nuclear Weapons,” the Government supports the activities, including that of NGOs, for atomic bomb survivors and others to convey the realities of the atomic bombings to the international community.

As of December 2024, a total of 320 Special Communicators on 108 occasions and a total of 787 Youth Communicators on 55 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 Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) program that aims to have Japanese citizens aged 20 to 69 with skills, knowledge, and experience cooperate for, and contribute to

SPECIAL FEATURE

The Unsung Heroes of NGO Growth — The 25th Anniversary of the NGO Consultant Scheme

Japanese international cooperation NGOs are demonstrating a significant presence by providing fine-tuned support tailored to local residents, leveraging the experts and experience of civil society in developing countries and regions. The NGO Consultant Scheme, to which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has provided ongoing support, plays a major role in the growth of these NGOs. The Scheme began in 1999 as part of a program to develop the environment for NGO activity, and marked its 25th anniversary in 2024.

NGO Consultants aim to increase the public understanding of international cooperation, raise the baseline operational capabilities and strengthen the foundations of regional NGOs, and work on further enhancing the information provision of specific organizations under contract from MOFA. Currently, a total of 10 organizations across nine blocks (Hokkaido, Tohoku, Kanto, Chubu/Hokuriku, Kinki, Chugoku, Shikoku, Kyushu, and Okinawa) are active as NGO Consultants, reaching prefectures around Japan by also providing a visiting service. Their main areas of activity are responding to inquiries and requests for advice from the general public about the field of international cooperation (such as the establishment and organizational operation of NGOs, support in finding employment in NGOs and international cooperation-related organizations, and providing information about international cooperation activities), supporting NGO publicity activities, and the visiting service. The visiting service involves, for example, opening NGO Consultant booths such as at international cooperation-related events held around Japan, responding to requests for advice from event participants. Visiting Consultants also hold lectures, seminars, and workshops related to international cooperation based on requests from JICA, local governments, civil society groups, and schools. In such ways, Consultants contribute to promoting understanding of international cooperation as well as NGO growth in Japan.

In addition, NGO Consultants Liaison Meeting is held twice a year between MOFA's Non-Governmental Organizations Cooperation Division and NGO Consultants, which include exchanges of opinions and information sharing about the Scheme's operational direction and issues which should be addressed in entirety. In such ways, MOFA is working to further enhance the NGO Consultant Scheme. The Second Meeting of FY2024 was held in Kochi City together with the "International Festival 2024" international cooperation event. Speakers from the NPO SEASIDE GALLERY and Kochi University Center for Regional Sustainability and Innovation were also invited to this Meeting to share their experiences on the topic of "how to broaden the base scope of regional internationalization and international cooperation?" After the speeches about initiatives promoting the internationalization of Kochi Prefecture while aiming for coexistence with local communities, the issues and future outlooks in the respective regions were discussed through lively Q&A sessions as well as group debates. Exchanges of opinions were also held about the number of requests for advice, distinctive initiatives, visiting service implementation status, future challenges, etc. at each organization.

Looking ahead, MOFA will work through the NGO Consultant Scheme for the growth of Japanese international cooperation NGOs as well as further promoting understanding of international cooperation and NGO activities among the public.



Responding to inquiries at a booth during visiting service (Photo: Kansai NGO Council)



Commemorative photo at the Second NGO Consultants Liaison Meeting of FY 2024 (Kochi Prefecture)

COLUMN

What I Felt While Teaching in the Solomon Islands

KOTAKI Momoka, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer (JOCV)
of JICA Volunteer Program (Specialty: Elementary Education)
Country: Solomon Islands

Walking through town, I hear cheerful greetings like “morning!” and “*ohayō*!” I am in the Solomon Islands, a small archipelago in the Pacific Ocean to the northeast of Australia. The country has deep historical connections with Japan, including sites of fierce battles during the Pacific War such as Guadalcanal. What I was most surprised about after arriving in the Solomon Islands was how people on the street would speak to me in Japanese, saying *ohayō* (good morning) and *arigatō* (thanks). When I asked the locals why, they told me “A JICA Volunteer had once been based in our village...” and then talked about their memories of the JICA Volunteer. They also conveyed their thanks, saying “We are grateful for them coming to help the Solomon Islands. We love the Japanese people.” Above all, they appreciate the national character of the Japanese people, such as diligence, politeness, and kindness. I believe this was the result of the actions of each Japanese participant in the JICA Volunteer program and other projects over the years.

I am based at a small elementary school with a total of around 150 students run by the Guadalcanal Province, on the island of Guadalcanal, where the capital is. The Solomon Islands faces a variety of issues in education. One is that the rate of school attendance is low, partly because there is no compulsory education, and another is the disparities in attitude toward education between teachers and parents. Progress has been made in creating and distributing the educational curriculum and textbooks over the last ten years thanks to support from overseas. Going forward, thoughtful lesson planning as well as improvements to the teaching skills of fellow teachers are needed so that children can enjoy their learning.

As part of my activities, I have advocated for the theme of “creating a school” where children can feel that “school is a fun place.” To that end, I believe that close cooperation between teachers, students, and parents is essential, and have drawn up specific plans to engage with each of them.



Group photo taken with fellow teachers at St. Mary Tanagai School on World Teachers' Day (the author is in the center with the lei around her neck)



The author teaching mathematics to third graders

I hold a training day for teachers once a week. During the training, they work to enhance their teaching skills through discussions that I lead about skill building and how to engage with their work as teachers. We provide children with opportunities for learning through experiences outside the classroom, such as field trips, events once per term, and tending a school vegetable garden. To encourage parents to take a greater interest in school and their children's education, I have suggested open class days and parent-teacher conferences. By having parents see what children experience at school, I am working to foster a shared awareness of working in cooperation to raise children.

Being based in an unfamiliar country, I have had struggles with interpersonal relationships and learning the language, but I have been able to continue my activities thanks to the people of the Solomon Islands, who have always been there for me and treated me like family. The COVID-19 pandemic not only delayed my dispatch but also changed the country I was previously assigned to, and it began four years later than originally planned. Nevertheless, I am grateful from the bottom of my heart that I was able to volunteer here. My two-year assignment is almost finished, but I will do everything I can right until the end, doing my best for the people of the Solomon Islands.

COLUMN

Strong Bonds Spanning More Than 50 Years between Malawi and JICA Overseas Cooperation Volunteers

Embassy of Japan in Malawi

To date, many young Japanese people have participated in the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) program, which forms a bridge connecting Japan and the people of developing countries. Among all countries worldwide, Malawi has received the highest number of volunteers. Volunteer dispatches to Malawi began in 1971, and in 2021, the program marked its 50th anniversary there. Over 1,900 volunteers have been dispatched in total, supporting various fields such as health and medicine, education, and agricultural development.

In Malawi, it is common to hear that people in every region have worked with Japanese volunteers. Government officials also recall having been taught by former volunteer teachers. A common theme in these accounts is praise for JOCVs who, despite harsh conditions, lived the same lifestyle as the Malawian people and worked hard alongside them from the same perspective.



A volunteer giving lessons at a school
(March, Nsaru, Malawi; Photo: JICA)



A volunteer conducting on-site
medical consultations
(July, Salima, Malawi; Photo: JICA)



Group photo at a sports day mainly
organized by volunteers
(October, Monkey Bay, Malawi; Photo: JICA)

Even after leaving Malawi, the bonds created by the volunteers continue. In 2019, Malawi's former Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Francis Kasaila, visited Japan for the Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 7) held in Yokohama. During his visit, he reunited after 36 years with his two former volunteer teachers of mathematics and science who had been dispatched to his hometown of Nsanje. At the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, Ota City in Gunma Prefecture served as a host town for Malawi, with strong support from a former volunteer. Since then, Ota City has continued exchanges, welcoming English teachers from Malawi and sending relief supplies there. In August 2024, Minister of Foreign Affairs Nancy Tembo visited Japan and met with Mayor of Ota City SHIMIZU Masayoshi to discuss advancing plans for a friendship city agreement.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic caused difficult times, including the evacuation of JOCVs abroad, as of November 2024, 47 volunteers remain active across Malawi. Upon completion of their service, each volunteer is given a Certificate of Recognition from the Minister of Foreign Affairs through the Japanese Ambassador to Malawi. This tradition began in 2009, the year after the Embassy opened in Malawi. Many former volunteers continue to work for the benefit of Malawi and Africa as a whole. The steady efforts of individual JOCVs have been a catalyst for Japanese nationals to understand Malawi and Malawians to understand Japan. Through these activities, JOCVs play a major role in deepening the friendly relations between Japan and Malawi and are a significant asset for Japanese diplomacy.

economic and social development in developing countries through living, working and fostering mutual understanding with local residents. As of the end of March 2024, a total of 56,402 JOCVs have been dispatched to 99 countries since the program's launch in 1965. The dispatched volunteers have been engaged in approximately 18 job categories in nine sectors: Planning/Government, Business/Tourism, Public Works/Utilities, Human Resources, Agriculture/Forestry/Fishery, Health/Medical Care, Mining and Manufacturing, Social Welfare Services, and Energy. Efforts are also being made to give the knowledge and experience of returned JICA volunteers to Japanese society in educational settings, local communities, and private companies and elsewhere. The activities of JOCVs, which are founded on the participation of Japanese citizens, are highly regarded both domestically and internationally, particularly in host countries. (See the Column on page 337.)

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 7,702 experts were newly dispatched in FY2023, with the scope of activities reaching 99 countries and regions.

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, the Foreign Minister and respective prefectural governors invite members of diplomatic corps to Japan, foreign chambers of commerce and industry, and company representatives, among others, to the Iikura Guest 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. MOFA co-hosted receptions in January with Niigata Prefecture and in March with Tokushima Prefecture, creating opportunities to promote further exchange between the prefectures and participants including diplomatic corps in Japan. The reception co-hosted with Niigata Prefecture was attended by approximately 170 guests, at which Foreign Minister Kamikawa introduced the diverse attractions of the prefecture. In particular, she stressed the importance of recognizing the outstanding cultural heritage value of the "Sado Island Gold Mines" ahead of its inscription

as a World Heritage Site and called on the participants, including diplomatic corps in Japan, for their cooperation in spreading the charms of Niigata Prefecture. The reception included booths showcasing local products including seafood, processed rice products, and local *sake*, as well as the Sado Island Gold Mines, carp (*nishikigoi*), jade, traditional handcrafts, and tourism, and featured a stage performance of "Ondeko (Deity mask dance)," Sado traditional performing arts. The reception co-hosted with Tokushima Prefecture was attended by approximately 230 guests, at which Foreign Minister Kamikawa introduced Tokushima Prefecture's initiatives toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, she touched on Host Town exchanges as a legacy of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020, and expressed her hope that the attractiveness of Tokushima Prefecture would be further promoted worldwide. The reception included booths showcasing local products including food, local *sake*, traditional crafts, initiatives toward achieving the SDGs, and Host Town exchanges, and featured a stage performance of "Awa Odori," a traditional festival dance of Tokushima Prefecture.



Reception co-hosted with the Governor of Niigata Prefecture (backdrop: Panel introducing "Sado Island Gold Mines") (January 23, Iikura Guest House, MOFA, Tokyo)



Reception co-hosted with the Governor of Tokushima Prefecture (March 13, Iikura Guest House, MOFA, Tokyo)

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. In FY2024 the seminar was held in January 2025.

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. Co-hosted with the Union of Kansai Governments, a tour of Nara Prefecture and Sakai City in Osaka Prefecture titled "KANSAI Tour Featuring Gastronomy, History, and Culture" was held on January 30 and 31. Looking ahead to the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, the tour showcased the history, culture, food, industries, tourism, and local products of the Kansai area. A tour of Yame City in Fukuoka Prefecture titled "Tour

Exploring the Tradition of Yame, Land of Tea" was held on June 6 and 7. The participating members of the diplomatic corps in Japan deepened their understanding of the traditional crafts and culture of the city, including Yame tea, which has a history of 600 years. During a tour to Fukushima Prefecture on October 10 and 11, the members of diplomatic corps visited the Hamadori region, which was directly affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake, understanding the situation at the time of the earthquake, seeing the current state of reconstruction in Fukushima, and deepening their understanding of the appeal of safe and delicious food from Fukushima. A tour of Kyoto City was held on October 30 and 31. During the tour, the participating members of the diplomatic corps in Japan engaged with companies based in the city, including start-up companies, and visited the Kyoto State Guest House, deepening their understanding of the city's industries, history, and culture. A tour of Sano City in Tochigi Prefecture, which was celebrating its 20th anniversary of its municipality, was held on November 18 and 19. In addition to experiencing cricket a sport promoted by Sano city in Japan — participants deepened their understanding of the city's traditional crafts, industries, and tourism.

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" as a webinar in January and December. The first part of the January Forum on the topic of "Economic Diplomacy and Public-Private Partnerships" was presented by MOFA, the second part, "International contribution and exchange through the re-use of the fire engines and ambulances etc. from local governments" was presented by The Society for Promotion of Japanese Diplomacy, and the third part, "Recent situations regarding the tourism of the inbound visitors after the COVID-19, and efforts in Regions," was presented by the Japan Tourism Agency. After the third speech, a question-and-answer session was held with the local government participants. The first part of the December Forum on the topic of "Japan-ASEAN Relations" was presented by MOFA, and the second part, "SAKE Tourism Saves Japan," was presented by a



Foreign diplomatic corps visiting sites in Nara Prefecture and Sakai City in Osaka Prefecture (Diplomats' Study Tour) (January 30, Nara Prefecture, January 31, Sakai City, Osaka Prefecture)



Foreign diplomatic corps visiting the Yame Central Tea Plantation (Diplomats' Study Tour) (June 7, Yame City, Fukuoka Prefecture)



Exchange meeting hosted by Fukushima Prefecture (Diplomats' Study Tour) (October 10, Fukushima Prefecture)



Foreign diplomatic corps visiting the Kyoto State Guest House (Diplomats' Study Tour) (October 31, Kyoto City)



Foreign diplomatic corps visiting the Sano International Cricket Ground (Diplomats' Study Tour) (November 18, Sano City, Tochigi Prefecture)

sake coordinator. After the second speech, a panel discussion was held between *sake* experts such as master brewers and sommeliers, and a question-and-answer session was held with the local government participants.

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 to support those efforts, including the promotion of exports of products from across Japan and the promotion of tourism, 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 2024 to March 2025. The 41 local governments created short movies conveying the charms of each region, and these clips were posted on channels such as the Weibo (Chinese social media) account of the Embassy of Japan in China with the aim of allowing many people in China and Hong Kong to experience the charms of

Japan's regional tourism, culture, and cuisine firsthand using social media. In addition, the Embassy of Japan in China organized events in which Japanese food-related companies and local governments introduced food and tourism. In Hong Kong, MOFA held a promotional event for Tohoku and other regions at Hong Kong Book Fair in July. By also utilizing Key Opinion Leaders (KOL) and influencers, these initiatives convey the attraction of Japan's regions to many people.

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 2024, 245 diplomatic missions overseas held these receptions in-person, 119 of which promoted the attractiveness of Japan's 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



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"

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 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 actively call attention to "Traditional knowledge and skills of sake-making with koji mold in Japan," which was inscribed on the UNESCO

(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>



Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2024.

In providing ODA, MOFA and JICA also liaise with the likes of Japanese local governments, utilizing the experience and expertise of Japanese local governments

— as well as the excellent products and technologies of local SMEs — in order to address issues facing developing countries due to rapid economic growth, such as water treatment, waste disposal, urban transportation, and anti-pollution measures.

Section

2

Supporting Japanese Nationals Overseas

1 Risks and Safety of Japanese Nationals Overseas

(1) Incidents and Accidents in 2024 and Responses to them

As of 2024, approximately 13.0 million⁽¹⁾ 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 had been no Japanese victim of terrorism incidents since 2020; however, in April 2024 one Japanese national was injured in a terrorist attack in Karachi, Pakistan. 2024 was another year in which a large number of terrorist attacks occurred in various regions. The main terrorism incidents included a bombing in Kerman, Iran (January), a mass shooting in Moscow, Russia (March), a bombing near the international airport in Karachi, Pakistan (October), and a mass shooting in Tel Aviv, Israel (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. Many incidents also occurred in Africa, such as in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, and Mozambique.

In recent years, Islamic extremists have expanded their scope of activities around the globe, meaning that terrorist attacks have also been occurring in Europe, North America, and Asia, where many Japanese nationals travel and reside. There is a persistent and significant threat of terrorism in Western countries, characterized by a high incidence of attacks perpetrated by: homegrown terrorists radicalized online or through

other means; lone offenders with limited or no discernible organizational links; and attacks targeting soft targets, i.e., locations with large numbers of civilians. 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 also been intensifying in frequency.

Incidents in which Japanese nationals fell victim to crimes (including indiscriminate harm incidents), traffic accidents, and mountain-climbing accidents continued to occur in many locations around the world in 2024, to which MOFA provided support.

Natural disasters also occurred around the world with great damage in such cases as the earthquake off the eastern coast of Taiwan (April), as well as typhoons, hurricanes, heavy rains, and wildfires in different regions.

After the public security rapidly deteriorated in Haiti, in the Caribbean, the Government of Japan cooperated with the Government of France in supporting Japanese nationals to leave the country (March). Large-scale riots broke out in New Caledonia, a territory of France in the Pacific, for which the Government of Japan accordingly raised the risk level, and, in cooperation with the Governments of Australia and France, supported Japanese nationals to leave New Caledonia (May). When the exchanges of fire between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, in the Middle East, intensified, the Government of Japan raised the risk levels for Israel and Lebanon, supporting Japanese nationals to leave Lebanon using a Self-Defense Forces' (SDF) aircraft and government-chartered vessels (October).

In addition, whenever necessary depending on the regional situation, MOFA issued overseas travel safety information related to countries and regions where

⁽¹⁾ Source: Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO)

particular caution is considered necessary for traveling and residing.

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.

In 2024, a new clade of Mpox began spreading, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in central Africa. Based on the World Health Organization (WHO) declaring a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), MOFA issued Travel Advice and Warning on Infectious Diseases for seven countries in Africa including DRC. Furthermore, as dengue fever, one of the mosquito-borne diseases has spread, particularly in tropical regions, MOFA has issued Region-wide Infectious Disease Safety Information for the entire world, highlighting matters worth paying attention to when travelling and staying abroad.

(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 14,454. Within these overall numbers, Japanese embassies and consulates general worldwide provided attentive assistance in many ways 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. Those traveling abroad must be prepared for multiple risks such as terrorist attacks and infectious disease, and it is more difficult than ever to respond if Japanese nationals 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.

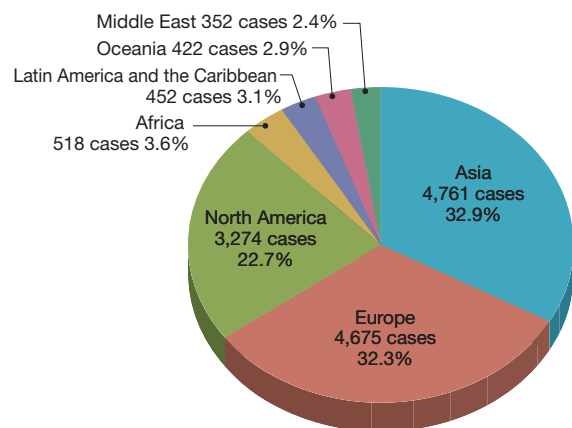
Based on this perspective, MOFA works to enhance the safety awareness of Japanese nationals and promote its safety measures by disseminating information widely to the general public. Specifically, MOFA issues

the latest safety information for each country and region on its Overseas Safety website. Furthermore, MOFA sends emails on the latest safety information of travel destinations to those Japanese nationals residing or traveling abroad who have submitted Overseas Residential Registration or registered 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 Registration, such as distributing information cards at all passport centers and releasing promotional videos on the official MOFA YouTube channel. 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. MOFA set up a booth at Tourism Expo Japan in Tokyo in September, providing information and raising attention about the safety of Japanese nationals residing or traveling abroad. As of February 2025, the number of travelers who had registered on Tabi-Regi since its launch in July 2014 exceeded 10.7 million, reflecting initiatives for enhancing the system's convenience and activities that aim at promoting registration.

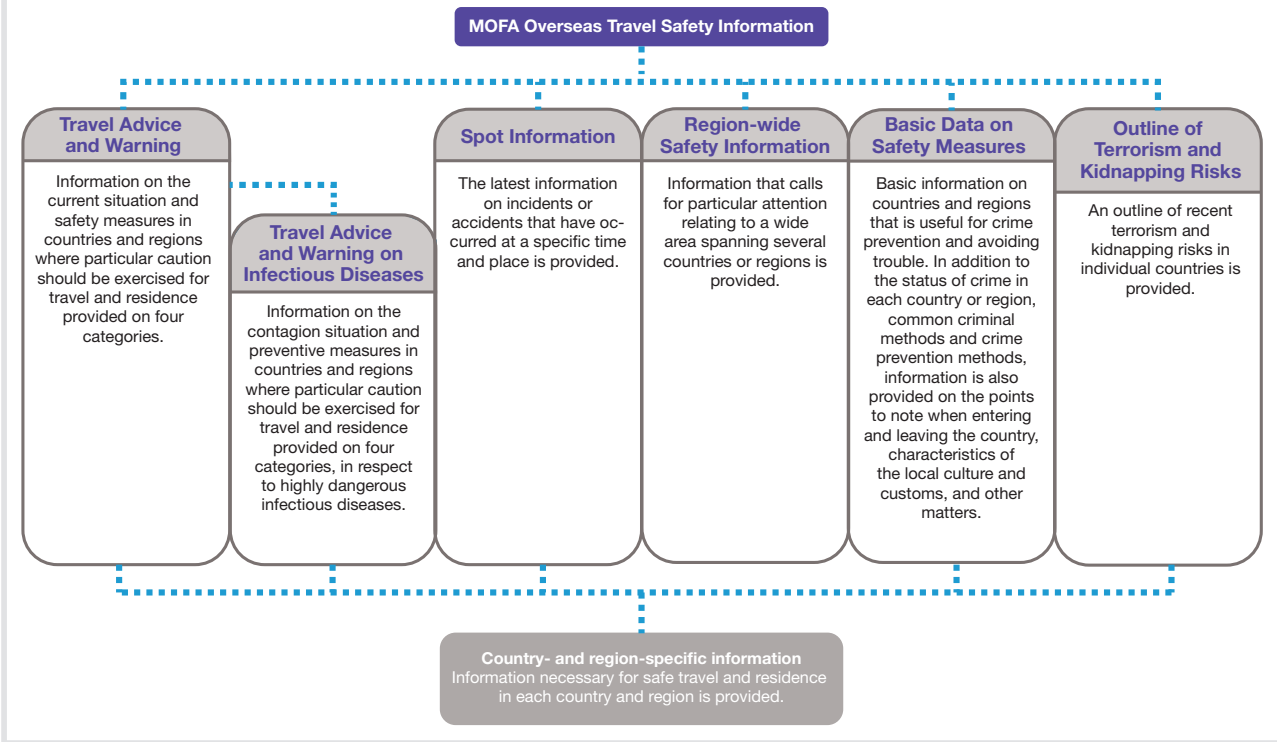
Previously, Overseas Residential Registration was only possible after arriving in the country of residence and confirming the overseas address. However, from May 1, 2024, registration became possible up to 90 days before departure from Japan, even if the overseas

■ 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

■ Main Overseas Safety Information posted on MOFA's Overseas Safety Website (structure and overview)



address was not yet confirmed. This change enabled receiving overseas travel safety information as well as useful information about living abroad provided by diplomatic missions overseas before departing Japan.

MOFA strives to enhance the knowledge and capability of the Japanese people concerning overseas safety measures and crisis management through seminars and training. In 2024, MOFA held virtual and in-person seminars on safety measures (11 times at diplomatic missions overseas and 5 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 organizations. The Joint Practical Training outside Japan had been on hold since September 2019 due to COVID-19, but restarted in 2023 after an approximately 3.5 year hiatus, and in January 2024 it was held in Türkiye. These initiatives are useful in preventing harm from regular crimes and terrorism, but also in improving



The actors ISHIDA Hikari and MORITAKA Ai introduce Tabi-Regi (for people traveling overseas for less than three months) and Overseas Residential Registration (for people living overseas for three months or more)

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 regular meetings of Security Consultation and Liaison Committees. Diplomatic missions overseas 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 small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) Abroad,” with the aim of raising the awareness of SMEs, etc.



Overseas safety measures flyer (front)



Overseas safety measures flyer (back)

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.

MOFA has also created a leaflet titled “Overseas Travel Safety Measures” for Japanese traveling abroad. It compiles precautions to avoid a terrorist attack and kidnapping, responses in case of involvement, and emergency contact information. The leaflet was distributed to company representatives etc.

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 officials deliver lectures and provide safety measures courses, including online sessions, at educational institutions such as universities. MOFA also requested cooperation to increase the submission of Overseas Residential Registration and the rate of registration on Tabi-Regi. MOFA will continue to strive to help institutions to raise students’ safety awareness 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 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 January 2025 covered 151 diplomatic missions overseas. MOFA takes such user feedback received via surveys seriously, and will continue its 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. MOFA has been expanding the scope of digitalization, and visible results include a reduced number of counter visits. Building on the outcomes so far, MOFA is promoting the digitalization of consular procedures with the aim of further increasing convenience. From April 1, linkage with the Ministry of Justice’s Family Register Information Linkage System starts, which allows applicants in principle to make submissions to Japanese diplomatic missions overseas involving a family register, without attaching a copy

of their family register obtained from the local government office of their registered legal domicile. 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.

(2) Passports: Maintaining trust, enhancing convenience and making administrative tasks more efficient

Border restrictions have been removed in many countries with the easing impact of the COVID-19, leading to growing numbers of Japanese nationals traveling overseas. While the number of passport applications continued to show a clear trend of recover from the previous year to follow, it has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels (The number of passports issued in 2024 was approximately 3.82 million, a 108.3% increase compared to 2023. In 2019, before the pandemic, around 4.49 million passports were issued).⁽²⁾

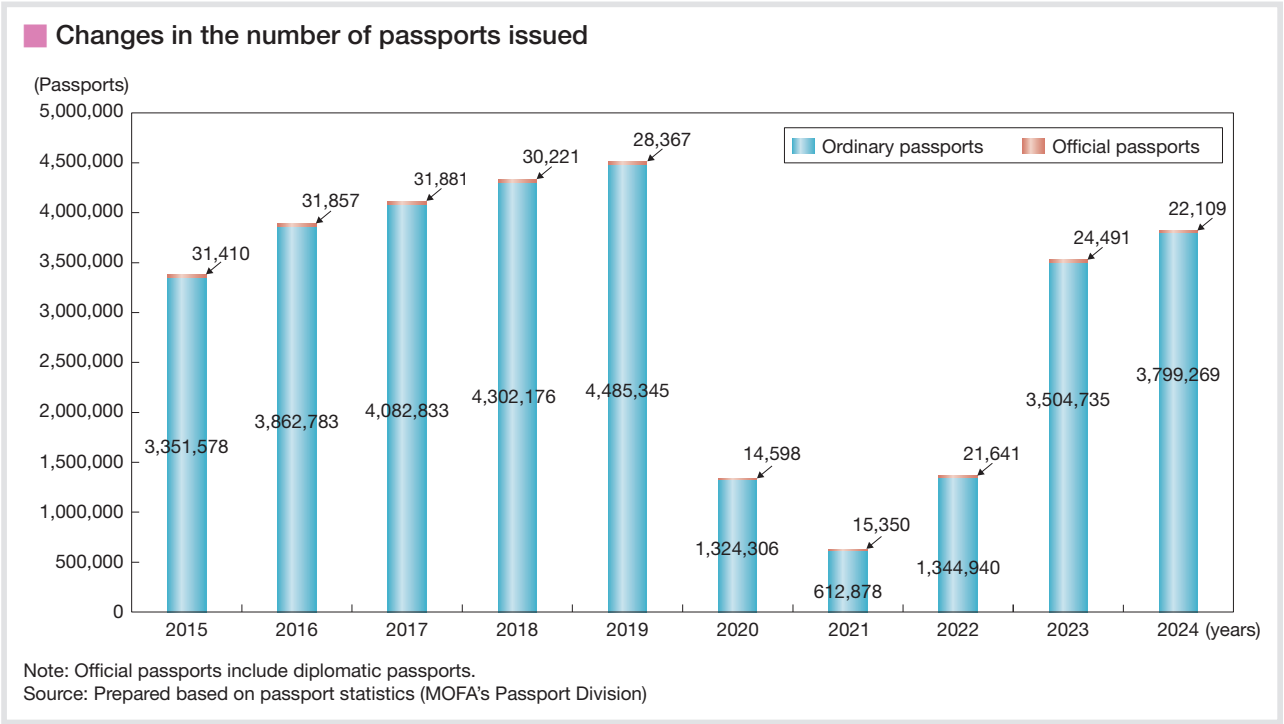
In terms of passport issuance, MOFA has gradually expanded the use of the online application for passports since its launch on March 27, 2023. Furthermore, since

March 24, 2025, online application and payment have been available for both first time and renewal applications in all prefectures. At the same time, family register information has become automatically linked in the system, removing the burden of submitting an original certified copy of the family register and improving the convenience. Online passport application is also available abroad through the Overseas Residential Registration (ORR) online application system (ORR net).

In addition, from March 24, the National Printing Bureau has begun printing the 2025 Passport (with the face photo page being made of polycarbonate on which photos and text are laser engraved), which is much more resistant to counterfeiting and alteration. (See the Column on page 354.)

Unauthorized obtaining of passports by impersonating others continues to occur,⁽³⁾ so MOFA has been working on further upgrading measures to prevent unauthorized obtaining of passports such as confirming a person's identity through in-person delivery or photographic comparison by facial verification technology.

Based on the criteria considered at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which sets



⁽²⁾ Source: Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO)
⁽³⁾ Known cases of unauthorized obtaining of passports by impersonation were as follows: eight in 2019, three in 2020, three in 2021, three in 2022, five in 2023 and two in 2024.

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.

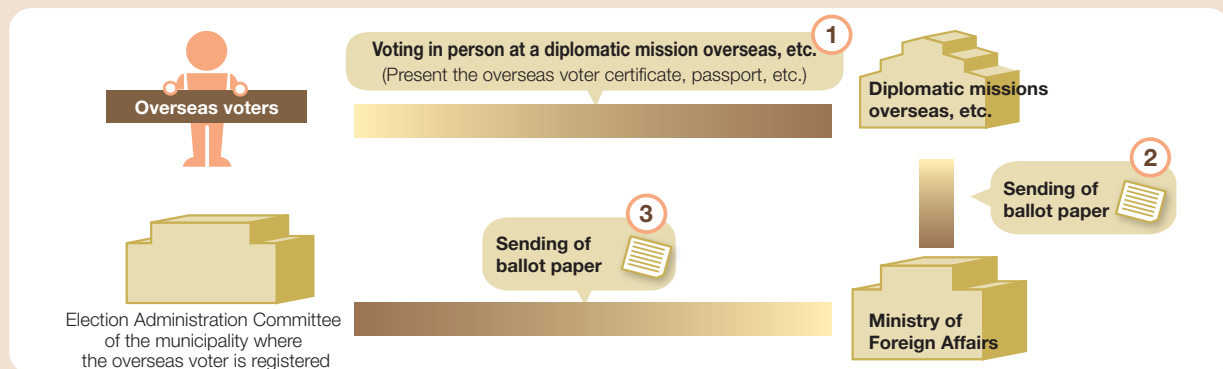
Starting in June 2018, the procedures were simplified by enabling application for registration on the overseas voter directory at the counter for the election board of the city or town government at the same time as filing a notice of moving overseas. Since July 2024, an initiative has begun to directly transmit application data between Japanese diplomatic missions overseas and election boards of the city or town governments, significantly accelerating the procedures for issuance of overseas voter identification.

The diplomatic missions overseas have been making efforts to spread the overseas voting system and to

Voting in elections for overseas voters

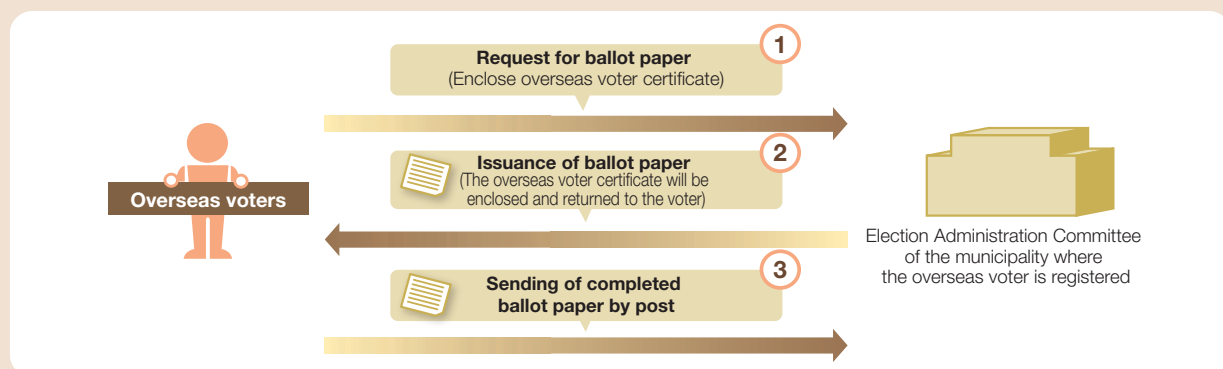
a. Voting at a diplomatic mission overseas

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).

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 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 2024, for the 50th general election of the House of Representatives in October, voting at diplomatic missions overseas was conducted for the 17th time involving 231 diplomatic missions and offices. In addition, a special election to the House of Councillors was held on the same day, as well as a national review of Supreme Court justices, which for the first time was open to overseas voters.

In 2025, MOFA will continue its PR and other activities to increase the number of registered voters and promote voting at diplomatic missions overseas.

(4) Application and Issuance of Individual Number Cards for People Moving Overseas

In order to promote the spread and usage of Individual Number Cards in accordance with the advance of digitalization, from May 27 the Cards can continue to be used while overseas by carrying out procedures at city or town government offices when moving overseas. In addition, if Japanese nationals moves overseas without carrying out the procedures, the Cards can now be received at diplomatic missions overseas by applying by post to the city or town governments or diplomatic missions overseas. MOFA will work in collaboration with related ministries and agencies and continue to consider measures toward further promoting usage of the Cards.

(5) 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 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 particular, it is the most important aspect to ensure an environment so that Japanese school children can learn with peace of mind, even overseas. In China, there have been cases of casualties and injuries of Japanese school children and others in Suzhou and Shenzhen, in June and September 2024, respectively. In response, MOFA took the necessary supplementary budget in order to support strengthening safety measures for Japanese schools around China, such as increased security guards, including those who ride on school buses. Through such initiatives, MOFA will continue to take every possible measure to ensure safety at overseas Japanese educational facilities such as Japanese schools and supplementary education schools.

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, consular emails, and other means. In addition, the websites of diplomatic missions overseas provide information about local medical institutions where patients can communicate in Japanese, and information gathered on the ground by medical officers working at diplomatic missions is listed on the MOFA website under "Global Medical Information." 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.

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, MOFA is calling for the simplification of procedures in countries, states or provinces where it is mandatory for Japanese nationals to take a test to obtain a local driver's license.

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.

Moreover, MOFA takes measures against loneliness and social isolation among Japanese nationals overseas, such as conducting the “Basic Survey on Staying and Living Overseas,” the results of which was announced in June 2024. MOFA also liaises with NPOs in Japan to provide attentive assistance to them for their individual cases.

3 Cooperation with Emigrants and Japanese Descendants (Nikkei)

The migration of Japanese nationals overseas began with the first voyage to Hawaii in 1868. 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. In such ways, MOFA is working

to further strengthen connections with Nikkei communities.

In addition, 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 2024, the 64th Convention of Nikkei and Japanese Abroad was held in person in Japan. Foreign Minister Iwata 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 for returning children to

their state of habitual residence and establishing opportunities for transboundary parent-child access.

This Convention entered into force for Japan on April 1, 2014, with 103 countries, including Japan, parties to the Convention as of the end of December 2024.

The Convention is implemented through mutual cooperation among the governmental agencies designated as the Central Authority in Contracting States. 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 their cases, in communication and cooperation with foreign Central Authorities.

In the ten years and nine months from the entry into force of the Convention until the end of December 2024, MOFA received a total of 613 applications for assistance: 411 applications seeking the return of the child and 202 applications seeking access to the child. Of the cases seeking the return of the child from Japan to another country, children were returned in 75 cases and conclusions were reached not to return the child in 59 cases. Of the cases requesting the return of the child from another country to Japan, children were returned in 76 cases and conclusions were reached not to return the child in 46 cases.

In November 2024, together with the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH), MOFA co-hosted the “2024 Webinar on the HCCH 1980 Child Abduction Convention in Asia and the

Pacific.” The webinar was organized to strengthen the implementation structure of the Convention in the Contracting States in the Asia-Pacific region, to promote cooperation between Contracting States, and to encourage non-Contracting States to join the Convention.

In order to build awareness of the Hague Convention among a broad public, MOFA holds seminars and contributes articles to relevant local community press targeting Japanese nationals living overseas, while 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 publishing them on MOFA’s website and video-sharing platforms.⁽⁴⁾

■ Number of applications for assistance received by MOFA based on the Implementation Act of the Hague Convention (as of the end of December 2024)

	Application for assistance in child's return	Application for assistance in visitation or contact with child
Applications related to child located in Japan	216	151
Applications related to child located overseas	195	51

(4) See the MOFA website concerning the 1980 Hague Convention and Japan’s efforts: https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/hr_ha/page22e_000249.html



COLUMN

No Preparation, No Overseas Travel — Protecting Yourself Abroad

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you plan to travel abroad? Perhaps it is delicious food or beautiful scenery. People travel abroad for many reasons, such as business trips and study abroad experiences, but the most important premise for spending quality time overseas is not getting involved in dangerous situations. Many terrorist attacks continue to occur worldwide, and Japanese nationals have been harmed in places such as Algeria, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

What specific actions should you take to avoid being involved in a terrorist attack at your travel destination, and how can you minimize the harm if by any chance you encounter one?

First, keep in mind that you are responsible for protecting yourself. Avoid countries, places, and times with unstable security conditions. In addition, exercise heightened caution during religious events and holidays when more people gather and travel, such as Ramadan and Christmas, as well as during election periods. During these times and at these places, it is important to avoid actions that make you stand out, and it is also critical to gather information in advance.

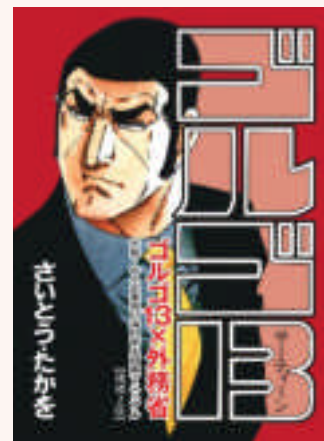
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) provides Travel Advice and Warnings, and region-specific information through its overseas travel registration service (Tabi-Regi) and Overseas Safety website. In particular, by registering your travel destination with Tabi-Regi, you can receive the latest safety information about the area by email. Gathering information in advance makes it possible to take specific actions at the appropriate time, such as avoiding dangerous locations, limiting the length of your stay, and refraining from traveling on foot.

In recent years, there have been many cases of terrorist attacks aimed at so-called “soft targets” — places with weak security and surveillance, such as shopping malls, public transportation, and event venues. In addition, a growing number of crimes have been perpetrated by lone offenders with little to no clear connection to terrorist organizations. As a result, detecting and preventing terrorist attacks in advance has become even more difficult than before.

So, what should you do if an attack actually occurs near you? The most important thing is to remain calm. If you hear gunfire or explosions, the basic actions are to immediately drop to the ground, run away, or, if you cannot escape, hide. If you are at the scene of an attack, check your surroundings, stay low, and evacuate to a safe place. If possible, use your mobile phone to send messages and request external help. If circumstances allow, also contact the Japanese Embassy or Consulate General. Be sure to anticipate possible risks and mentally prepare for them before traveling abroad so that you can respond appropriately no matter what happens at any time.

MOFA strives to enhance the knowledge and capabilities of the Japanese people concerning overseas safety measures and crisis management through seminars and training. MOFA has also created a manga safety manual in which Golgo 13 shows safety measures for traveling and/or living overseas, which is available (including video content) on the MOFA website.

To protect yourself abroad, MOFA would like you to make all possible preparations before your trip using the information presented here, with an attitude of “No preparation, No overseas travel.”



Golgo 13's Security Guidelines for Japanese SMEs Abroad

COLUMN

Making Passports More Resistant to counterfeiting and Alteration as well as Enhancing Convenience — Toward the Next Future with the New Passport

The first Japanese passport was issued in 1866, around 160 years ago. It was initially a single sheet of paper, and has changed with the times to improve safety and convenience: In 1926 passports became booklets including a face photo; since 2006, IC chips were embedded in the booklets; and from 2020, the visa pages feature the designs of the “Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji” by KATSUSHIKA Hokusai. Most recently from March 2025, production of the “2025 Passport” — with a polycarbonate face photo page — has begun at the National Printing Bureau.



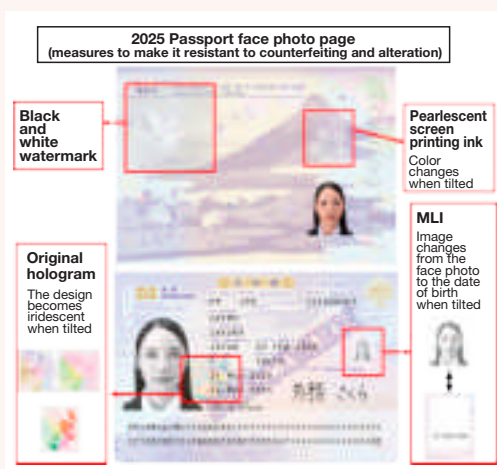
Securities Production Management Group, Banknote Department, National Printing Bureau

General Manager URAOKA Akihiro

The major change to the 2025 Passport is the base material of the face photo page. Previous passports had paper base material, onto which the prefectural passport offices printed the face photo using a thermal transfer printer. However, passports using paper base material can easily become targets for counterfeiting and alteration, and the international trend is shifting to plastic base materials, which make counterfeiting and alteration more difficult. Considering this trend, Japan has decided to introduce polycarbonate for the face photo page.

Personalization of the 2025 Passports is centralized to just two locations within Japan. The three face photos are each printed with different techniques, two of which use laser engraving technology. When the smallest face photo is tilted, the bearer's date of birth appears, and the third photo is inkjet printed in color on a paper page. A large number of other technologies which are not publicly disclosed also make the new passports more resistant to counterfeiting and alteration.

The design of the 2025 Passports continues to feature the “Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji” adopted in 2020, with different pictures used on each page. Attention has been paid to the order, with the first page featuring “*Koshu Inume-Toge* (The Inume Pass in Kai Province),” which evokes setting out on a journey, and the final page using “*Fukagawa Mannen-bashi Shita* (Under Mannen Bridge in Fukagawa),” an image which symbolizes returning from travels. In addition, the reverse side of the face photo page features an embossed cherry blossom design, which appears to move three-dimensionally when tilted. Additionally, the layout has been carefully designed to make it appear as a single painting surrounded by a frame, with an image of Mount Fuji overlapping the cherry blossom.



Continuing to manufacture booklets with stable quality is another effective route to making them resistant to counterfeiting and alteration, so we have established quality management standards and are conducting rigorous checking. Furthermore, in order to ensure quality and information security, the National Printing Bureau is working to improve risk management knowledge and making efforts to gain ISO accreditation.¹ We will continue to strive to maintain the highest international standards in quality and security.

From March 24, 2025, applications for both the first-time and renewal of passports are available online nationwide via MynaPortal. As MynaPortal is now linked to family register information, applicants no longer need to obtain a copy of their family register at a city hall counter, etc.

¹ International specifications formulated by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

Section 3

Diplomacy with the Support of the Public

1 Proactive Communications to the Public

(1) Overview

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

(2) Providing Information Through Domestic Media

MOFA has committed itself to promptly and accurately providing information through various media, such as newspapers, television, and the Internet, in order to gain the understanding and support of Japanese nationals for Japan's foreign policy. Specifically, 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 are live-streamed on the official MOFA YouTube channel, with the records and video of them published 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 social media, so that people can promptly follow and understand the purposes and the outcomes of the visits.

MOFA also regularly releases statements by the Foreign Minister 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 and other topics. Additionally, the Minister and State Ministers for Foreign Affairs explain the Government's foreign policies directly to the public through appearances on various media and interviews.



Press Conference by Foreign Minister Iwaya (October 2, Tokyo)

■ Dissemination of Information through Press Conferences

Minister for Foreign Affairs	105 times
Press Secretary	31 times
Total	136 times

(From January 1 to December 31, 2024)

■ Dissemination of Information through Documents

Statements by the Minister for Foreign Affairs	30 times
Statements by the Press Secretary	41 times
Press releases by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2,103 times
Total	2,174 times

(From January 1 to December 31, 2024)

(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 "MOFA for Kids," the "Anything Report from Around the World," "Easy Ways to Understand International Situations," and so on. In particular, "MOFA for Kids" creates and publishes a wide range of contents for children such as videos featuring MOFA officials to explain MOFA's

activities in an easy-to-understand way, national flag quizzes, and Q&A corners explaining vocabulary and international issues that are covered frequently in the news and newspapers. Moreover, new explanatory articles, etc. were added to "Easy Ways to Understand International Situations" building on the opportunities presented by the 60th anniversary of Japan joining the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as well as The 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM10) held in Tokyo.

In addition to the above, MOFA provides a variety of information through various social media platforms. In 2024, MOFA actively provided information about topics such as diplomatic events both within Japan and abroad, the situation in Ukraine, the situation in the Gaza Strip, and ALPS treated water.⁽¹⁾



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



MOFA for Kids



MOFA official X: https://x.com/MofaJapan_en

MOFA's official website



MOFA's official X account



MOFA's official Facebook account



MOFA's official Instagram account



(1) 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) Dialogue with Japanese Nationals

With the notion of “Public Relations through Dialogue with the People,” MOFA promotes direct dialogue between the people and MOFA officials.

“Dialogue with Students,” an event for direct engagement with university students, was held at MOFA in February. Lively discussions were held on topics such as Japan’s development cooperation policy, building on the milestone of the 70th anniversary of Japan’s Official Development Assistance (ODA). In addition, in November MOFA and Tohoku University co-hosted another “Dialogue with Students” with university students from the Tohoku region on topics such as “The United Nations and Japan’s Cooperation on Disaster Risk Reduction,” based on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. At the “Children’s Kasumigaseki Tour Day” held in August, MOFA ran a variety of programs for participants including talks and children’s press conference to deepen understanding about MOFA’s work and countries around the world.



Children’s press conference at “Children’s Kasumigaseki Tour Day” (August 8, MOFA)



Visit by Dalton Tokyo Junior & Senior High School to MOFA as part of “Visits by Elementary, Junior and Senior High School Students to MOFA” (July 11, MOFA)

Various programs in which MOFA sends its officials to venues such as local government offices, international exchange organizations, universities and high schools throughout Japan, as well as the one in which elementary, junior, and senior high school students visit MOFA were conducted both online and in person at the request of the participating schools and organizations. These included “Lectures on the International Situations,” “Diplomatic Talks,” “Talks for High School,” and “Visits by Elementary, Junior and Senior High School Students to MOFA.”

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 Official Development Assistance (ODA) policies and specific measures of ODA to numerous schools via online. Additionally, MOFA publishes the periodical journal “Diplomacy,” widely sharing



Lecture on Japan’s foreign policy as part of “Diplomatic Talks” (July 5, Meijo University)



Periodical journal “Diplomacy”

information on the current international affairs relevant to Japan and discussions on diplomacy taking place in various areas at various levels. In 2024, the journal took up a range of diplomatic challenges as topics that offered an overview of the current international situation, examining Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the situation in the Gaza Strip, presidential and general elections around the world, such as the U.S. presidential election, 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 aimed at a broad readership in order to promote a deeper understanding on the organization and Japanese diplomacy, such as ALPS treated water. 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 records and in efforts to facilitate greater convenience in the public use of diplomatic documents. Since 1976, MOFA has declassified its postwar diplomatic records over time 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 39,000 by the end of 2024. Furthermore, MOFA has disclosed 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 2024, MOFA received 593 requests for disclosure, and documents totaling 82,549 pages were disclosed.

Holding around 120,000 diplomatic documents including 40,000 from the pre-war period, MOFA's Diplomatic Archives are specified as "the National Archives of Japan, etc." under the Public Records and Archives Management Act (Archives Management Act). The Archives respond to viewing and usage requests, answer inquiries regarding documents in the collection and diplomatic history, and display materials in the collection. In addition, the Archive has compiled important diplomatic documents since 1868 by theme and published them in succession as the "Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy," and since 1988 has also published an annual report.

COLUMN

“Dialogue with Students” — Discussing Foreign Policy with Young People

“I was nervous because I thought diplomacy is really weighty, but the seminar was fun, and I was able to relate to diplomacy! So much of it was new to me, and the image I had of diplomats changed!”

These comments are feedback from participants of the event “Dialogue with Students.” Aimed at deepening interest and understanding in Japan’s foreign policy and the international situation among the young generation of Japanese who will be leaders in the future, “Dialogue with Students” is typically held twice a year for undergraduate and graduate school university students.

Made up of a lecture-style session involving all participants and multiple Small-Group Sessions, “Dialogue with Students” is an interactive event in which Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) officials provide explanations about Japan’s foreign policy and then engage with students through Q&A and discussion sessions. A notable feature is the timeliness it brings to foreign policy by taking into consideration international conferences and anniversaries occurring that year. “Dialogue with Students” also showcases the Diplomatic Bluebook, the periodical journal “Diplomacy” and other materials to help deepen students’ learning.



“Dialogue with Students” poster

■ The session of the first “Conversations with MOFA Officials” in four years was a big success!

Held at MOFA in February, a total of 165 students participated in “Dialogue with Students” both in person and online. The lecture-style session involving all participants featured a keynote speech on the topic of the “Rapidly Changing International Situation and Japanese Diplomacy” as well as a speech on “Experiences by Young MOFA Officials.” The students passionately listened to these speeches blending real experiences which do not appear in the news. The Small-Group Sessions addressed three topics, all of which saw lively discussions: “United Nations Diplomacy,” linked to the Summit of the Future held at the UN in September, “Development Cooperation Policy,” building on the 70th anniversary of Japan’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 2024, and “Security Policy,” under the new National Security Strategy adopted at the end of 2022.



Students gathered in passionate discussion with MOFA officials during the informal conversation session (February 8, MOFA, Tokyo)

After the Small-Group Sessions, “Conversations with MOFA Officials” was also held. Students made comments such as “I was able to hear first-hand from MOFA officials specializing in a range of fields and languages about what I wanted to know.” The close interaction between participants and presenters is one of the attractions of this event.

■ Held in the Tohoku region in November for the first time!

“Dialogue with Students” was held at Tohoku University (Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture) in November, attracting 101 students, mainly from the Tohoku region. To date, the event had been held in Osaka and Nagoya as well as Tokyo, but this was the first session in Sendai, the Tohoku region.

On the topic of “Japan’s Foreign Policy and the International Community at Turning Point in History,” the keynote speech provided an overview of the recent international situation as well as explained trends and issues in public diplomacy, followed by a lively Q&A session. The subsequent Small-Group Sessions engaged in three topics, each of which saw lively discussions among small numbers of participants: “The United Nations and Japan’s Cooperation on Disaster Risk Reduction” based on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 adopted

at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015; “Youth, Business and Africa,” looking ahead to the Ninth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 9) to be held in Yokohama in August 2025; and “International Law and Japanese Diplomacy,” oriented toward peace through the rule of law. A student who participated in the session about “The UN and Japan’s Cooperation on Disaster Risk Reduction” commented that “learning about the Sendai Framework helped me appreciate more how our home region is linked to the world.” This feedback showed how their understanding of diplomacy was deepened through picking up topics tailored for the event’s venue, the Tohoku region.

“Dialogue with Students” is also a great encouragement for MOFA officials. MOFA plans to continue placing emphasis on engagement with the younger generation, holding events with even better content to further deepen their understanding of diplomacy. MOFA looks forward to seeing many more students participate in the future!



Students in discussion with the facilitator (MOFA official) in a Small-Group Session (November 6, Tohoku University, Miyagi Prefecture)

COLUMN

Reliving the History of Diplomacy

— The Challenge and Outlook of the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) at Azabudai Hills

■ Opening of the New Exhibition Room

On April 5, the Exhibition Room of the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs moved to the fifth floor of the Azabudai Hills Mori JP Tower and reopened. At the Opening Ceremony, Foreign Minister Kamikawa commented that “I expect that the new Exhibition Room will become a place where everyone can stop by anytime and further familiarize themselves with Japan’s diplomacy.” The Ceremony was featured in many media outlets, and by early September more than 10,000 people had visited since the opening to the public on April 8.



Foreign Minister Kamikawa cutting the ribbon at the Opening Ceremony (April 5, at the new Exhibition Room of the Diplomatic Archives, Tokyo)

■ Significance and Features of the New Exhibition Room

Located in Azabudai Hills, a new landmark district in Tokyo, the new Exhibition Room is designed to welcome a large number of visitors. Being accessible to many guests of diverse age groups is critical to fulfilling the mission of the Diplomatic Archives.

The new Exhibition Room showcases the history of Japan’s diplomacy from the final days of the Tokugawa Shogunate to the present day in an easy-to-understand format. The Permanent Exhibition Room displays diplomatic documents such as major treaties in chronological order, with quotes from successive foreign ministers and diplomats displayed on screens. Differences with the previous exhibits include now also displaying treaties from the 1970s onward and presenting diplomatic activities until the present day. In addition, panels and video displays explaining their historical background have been enhanced, all designed to pique visitors’ interest. The panels also include explanations in English to make them more accessible to visitors from overseas. Furthermore, the Special Exhibition Room displays materials related to Prime Minister YOSHIDA Shigeru at the time of acceptance of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, and SUGIHARA Chiune, who as a diplomat stationed in Lithuania issued “Visas for Life” to Jewish refugees.

■ Future Issues and Initiatives

A range of initiatives are being taken regarding the new Exhibition Room to make it attractive to a larger number of visitors. Particular effort is being put into educational assistance, through working to link with school education such as by displaying major treaties listed in history textbooks. Group visits from elementary, junior, and senior high schools — including school trips and social studies field trips — are actively welcomed, and mini lectures are also provided. Effort is also being put into information provision to spark the curiosity of even people who do not usually have much interest in diplomacy or history.

The Diplomatic Archives also hosts featured exhibitions and special exhibitions. In 2024, the Special Exhibition: “Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between Japan and the U.K. — MUTSU Munemitsu and Treaty Revision —” displayed original treaty-related documents to mark the 130th anniversary of the signing of this Treaty. In addition, the exhibition “Relations between Greece and Japan through Diplomatic Documents” was co-hosted with the Embassy of Greece in Tokyo to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the establishment of formal relations between Japan and Greece as well as the “Year of Culture and Tourism Between Japan and Greece.” The Diplomatic Archives plans to continue holding more attractive exhibitions, including those of original documents.



Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between Japan and the U.K. (instrument of ratification)

■ History and Role of the Diplomatic Archives

The story of the Diplomatic Archives began when it was first opened in April 1971. Since then, this independent initiative of MOFA has preserved and managed documents and records which are valuable parts of Japan’s diplomatic history. The Diplomatic Archives also compiles the “Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy (Nihongaikobunsho),” which have been published since 1936 by MOFA. In 1988, the Annex including the Exhibition Room was built thanks to a donation from the Yoshida Shigeru Memorial Foundation. However, the aging building and its inconvenient location led to the relocation to Azabudai Hills. Based on the Public Records and Archives Management Act, since 2011 the Diplomatic Archives accordingly preserves diplomatic documents in perpetuity as “an intellectual resource to be shared by the people in supporting the basis of sound democracy,” and provides them for the use of the Japanese people.

2 Strengthening the Foreign Policy Implementation Structure

While Japan is facing the most severe and complex security environment in the post-war era, it is vital to fundamentally strengthen the foreign policy implementation structure to promote diplomatic power for maintaining and developing an international order based on the rule of law. 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 2025 Japan established an embassy in Eritrea as well as a Permanent Mission of Japan to the International Organizations in Nairobi, Kenya.

Eritrea is in a geopolitically-critical location along international sea lanes linking the Indo-Pacific and Europe, making it an important country for the promotion of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP).” Moreover, Eritrea is a neighbor of Sudan, where armed conflict has been ongoing since April 2023, and has deep historical ties with Ethiopia, which is highly influential in regional peace and stability, making Eritrea a new site of information gathering in East Africa. In addition, as Eritrea has rich mineral, fisheries, and tourism resources, and good ports on the Red Sea, Japanese companies have expressed interest in investing in Eritrea. Given all these factors, it is necessary to further strengthen cooperation via opening an embassy to promote economic activity between both countries.

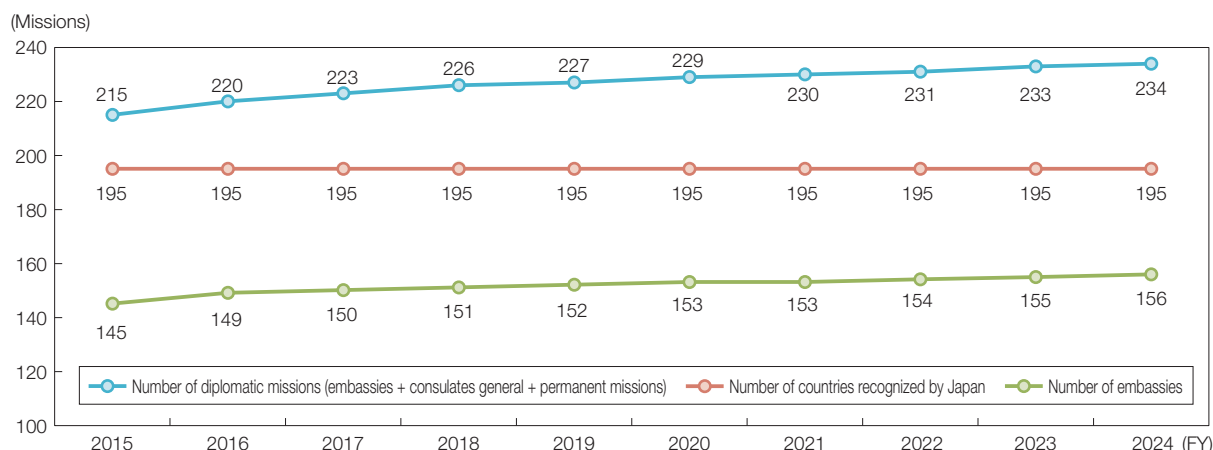
Nairobi is the location of international organization

headquarters, which play a key role in discussions about international environmental and urban issues, including those of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). UNEP is a general coordination organization focusing solely on the environmental field, and is an important partner for Japan in promoting international cooperation regarding the environment. UNEP is the secretariat of many multilateral environmental treaties and also functions as the secretariat of the intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) working toward formulating treaties about marine plastic litter. It is playing an extremely important role in these treaty negotiations. UN-Habitat is a United Nations (UN) agency engaged in a wide range of issues regarding human settlement. It contributes to initiatives toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including addressing a variety of issues facing cities. Building on establishing a Permanent Mission of Japan in January 2025, MOFA will strengthen its engagement in creating rules in the environmental field as well as in initiatives toward achieving Japan's SDGs which will have an impact on Japanese citizens' daily lives.

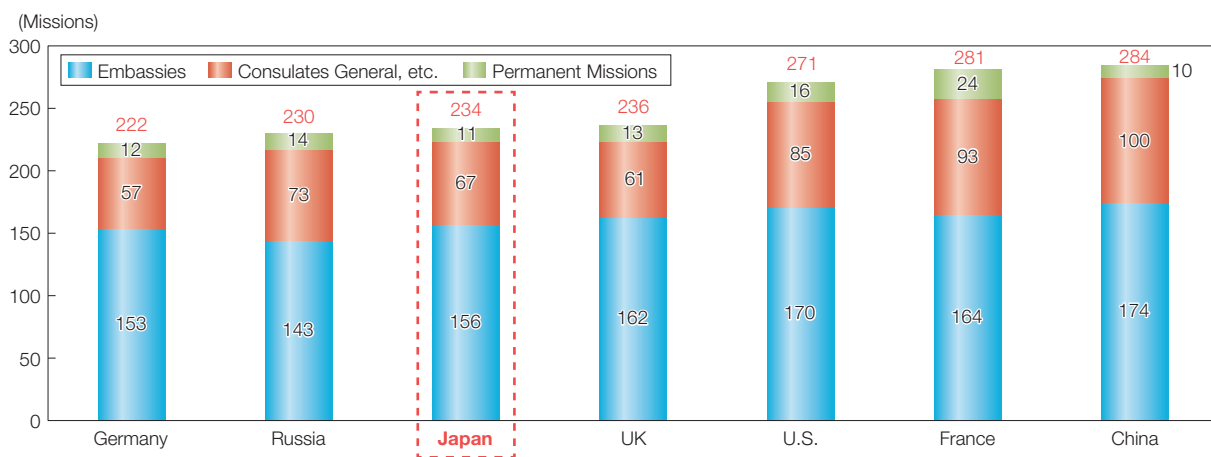
In addition to establishing more diplomatic missions overseas, it is important to secure and increase the number of staff members to support diplomacy at the MOFA headquarters and diplomatic missions overseas. In the context of the current severe budget and staff situation for the Government overall, the number of staff members at MOFA was increased in FY2024 by 70⁽²⁾ to 6,674 from FY2023 in order to strengthen cooperation with allies and like-minded countries, reinforce MOFA's information capabilities including countering disinformation, utilize Official Development Assistance (ODA) strategically, strengthen protection measures for Japanese nationals abroad, and enhance the consular structure. 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

⁽²⁾ 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



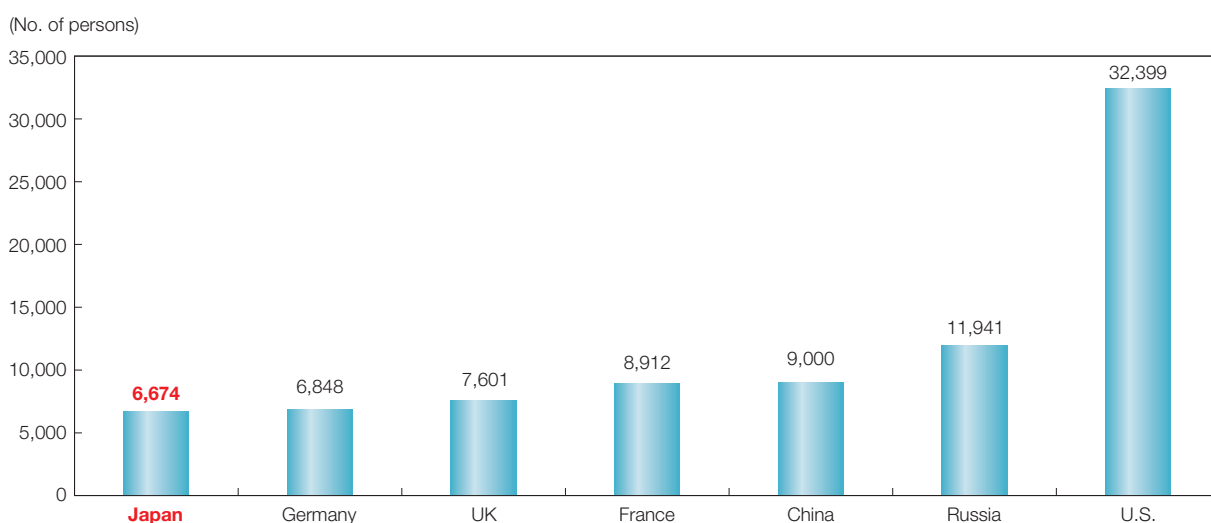
Comparison of the Number of Diplomatic Missions of Japan with Major Countries (P5 + Germany)



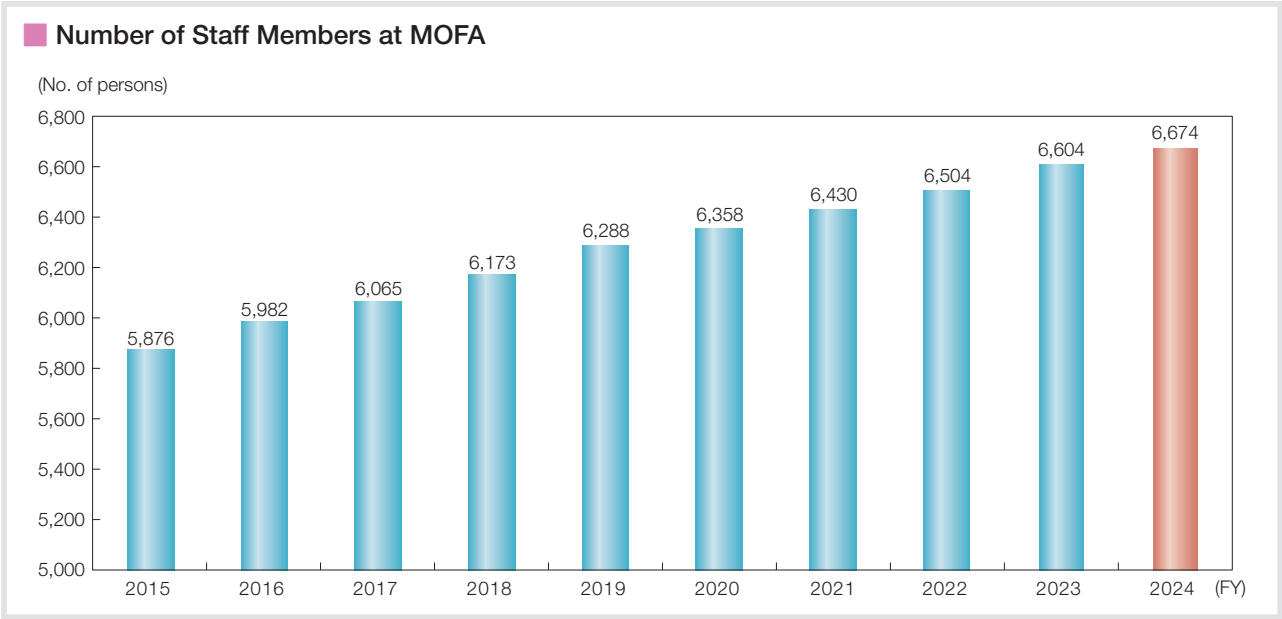
As of January 2025

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 FY2024 survey result, etc.



power and diplomatic policy. In the meantime, based on the belief that enhancing the diplomatic and consular policy implementation structure remains essential in FY2025, MOFA will increase its workforce by 87 staff.

In order to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law, MOFA appropriated 741.7 billion yen in the budget for FY2024 (of which 16.0 billion yen is appropriated in the Digital Agency budget). Furthermore, MOFA appropriated 214.5 billion yen in the supplementary budget for FY2024 (of which 6.41 billion yen is appropriated in the Digital Agency budget). The funding appropriated in the supplementary budget was for measures addressing pressing diplomatic issues, principally support for Ukraine as well as promoting business with Africa and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and strengthening cooperation with countries of the Global South, including humanitarian assistance in the Middle East and Africa.

MOFA's FY2025 government budget proposal appropriated 761.7 billion yen (of which 16.9 billion

yen is appropriated in the Digital Agency budget) based on the following priorities: (a) responding to an increasingly severe and complex security environment, (b) strengthening Japan's economic power, and (c) enhancing the foreign policy and consular policy implementation structure. This includes budgets for initiatives toward realizing FOIP, for strengthening relationships with countries of the Global South, for support for Ukraine and countries affected by the situation in Ukraine, for responding to the situation in Israel and Palestine, for Official Security Assistance (OSA), for support for the overseas expansion and business growth of Japanese companies through public-private cooperation by a concerted national effort, for strengthening initiatives toward the era of information warfare, and for enhancing the resilience and functions of Japan's diplomatic missions overseas.

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 deepening 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 FY2024, 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 commentaries activities and communications via the media by experts, and hosting symposiums which lead international debate. 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)⁽³⁾ 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 cooperation with overseas think tanks and the dissemination of research results both domestically and internationally. Through this scheme, in FY2024 senior high school engagement programs were held in Hokkaido and Shimane Prefecture regarding the territorial issues, and speeches and discussions for the younger generation were conducted. In addition, young researchers from Asia visited Japan to deepen understanding of issues regarding Japan's territory, sovereignty and history, engaging with Japanese researchers and building research networks. 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.

⁽³⁾ Refer to the website of The Japan Institute of International Affairs:
<https://www.jiia.or.jp/en/>



COLUMN

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.

■ **SUGIYAMA Yuji, Executive Chef for the Consul-General of Japan in Toronto**

My name is SUGIYAMA Yuji, and I have been the Executive Chef at the Consulate General of Japan in Toronto since June 2024. Since being assigned to Toronto, I have worked on intercultural exchange to spread Japanese food culture through the forum of dining at the official residence. My mission every day is to create “distinctively-Toronto Japanese flavors” by incorporating Canadian-produced ingredients. Toronto is a very diverse city, so I take into account a wide range of preferences and dietary restrictions.

It is often said that Japanese cuisine is “tasted with the eyes,” and I work to incorporate aspects of the changing seasons into my arrangements, such as maple leaves in the Toronto fall. After the meal at the Consul-General’s official residence, when I greet the guests and directly hear their thoughts and comments about the food, it makes me realize how my cooking is conveying Japanese food culture. Their words are highly motivating for my work as an executive chef. Executive chefs have sole charge of every aspect of the cuisine, including menu creation, ingredient purchasing, preparation, and plating up, but in this fantastic environment — including support from all the Consulate General staff — I feel motivated to work even harder. In addition, in Toronto, where immigrants make up a large portion of the population, ingredients from many parts of the world are available, which enables experiences that broaden the range of cuisine I provide at the official residence, as well as my own knowledge.



Tuna *kinutamaki** (incorporating Toronto maple leaves inside the glass bowl)

*The *Kinutamaki* style involves slicing ingredients thinly into a long sheet and wrapping other ingredients with it.



Assorted summer appetizer (consciously arranged to make them pleasant to the eye)

I have been interested in cooking since I was a little child, and first picked up a knife at around age 8. As I grew up in a port city, I was also filleting fish and preparing sea squirts from elementary school age. Cooking really is my life, and a way that I express myself.

I was transferred to Toronto with my daughter and family. In addition to the difficulties of juggling work and raising a child, the differences in the medical system and high cost of living etc. mean that it has not all been easy. On the other hand, I also make the most of my personal life here. Even daily cooking is a source of new ideas, we

can have our daughter experience the English language daily, and we have fun family trips on days off, such as to Niagara Falls. I am very grateful for this environment that enables me to have so many valuable experiences as a chef.

My determination to engage seriously with my work as a chef and steadily grow to new heights is deeply influenced by my experiences in the Great East Japan Earthquake. I am from Ishinomaki City. My parents' home was washed away by the tsunami, and I lost many friends in the disaster. Afterwards, I thought at length about what I, a survivor, could do. I felt that my mission would be to bring people hope and joy through my cooking. Memories of the disaster give me a special sense of purpose as a chef and a belief in the power of cooking.

Cuisine goes beyond words to touch people's hearts and bring them warmth. As an executive chef in Toronto, I treasure the opportunity to interact with our guests face-to-face by providing them with unique Japanese cuisine, in which each and every dish is imbued with the beauty and spirit of Japan. I will continue to hone my skills, always engaging seriously with cuisine without compromise, and little by little growing to new heights. By doing so, I hope that my cooking will — even just a little — make someone's heart richer.



Family trip to Niagara Falls

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs accepts applications at any time from candidates who wish to serve in diplomacy as Executive Chefs for Ambassadors/Consuls-General of Japan.

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 (Japanese only)).

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



X:
https://twitter.com/mofa_japan_chef



COLUMN

Boldness and Subtlety of Facilities Management at Embassies, Hubs of Diplomacy — Large-Scale Refurbishment and Ongoing Maintenance

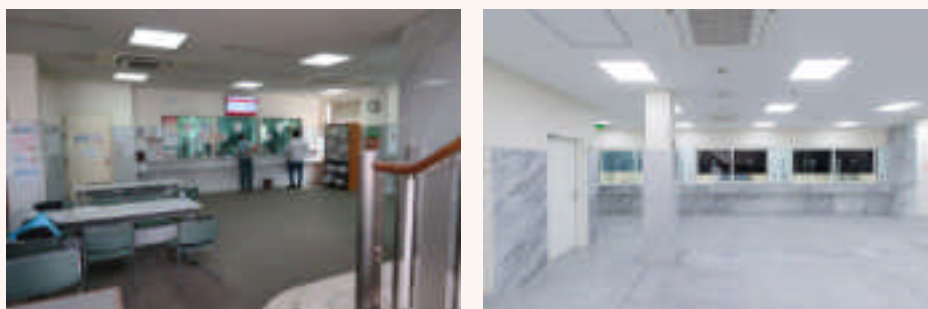
Were you aware of the roles at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) known as “technical officials?” As the “face of Japan,” overseas establishments such as Japanese embassies abroad provide the bases and settings for Japan's diplomatic activities, and they serve as the last strongholds for protecting 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 NIGORIKAWA Yuki, a technical official of the building and property management section, who was responsible for refurbishment work at the Embassy of Japan in Viet Nam. He describes the work that technical officials do.

■ Refurbishment work to meet the changing times

The Embassy of Japan in Viet Nam was completed in 1999. The number of applicants for visas to Japan has increased significantly over time, driven by Viet Nam's economic growth, progress in bilateral relations, and the introduction of the Technical Intern Training Program. By contrast, the number of application counters could not be easily scaled up to cope with such changes, leading to queues of applicants out of the building and onto the street at that time. Growing numbers of visa applicants also means a higher workload for the consular section, and their office space was accordingly becoming cramped.

To overcome these issues, MOFA undertook large-scale interior refurbishment aimed at expanding the visitor area, including consular section application counters, and office space. As the work involved only part of the interior, Embassy staff located in other areas continued with their work. However, in addition to noise, vibrations in particular reverberated through the building — even when doors were kept closed — necessitating care being taken on the work content and time to avoid disrupting Embassy activities.

The refurbishment scope was smaller than a rebuild or new build, but I truly realized one of the hurdles for this work was the need to pay attention to daily diplomatic activities, visitors, and Embassy staff working in the building. From a facilities management perspective, such large-scale refurbishment is on another level compared to ongoing maintenance such as routine small-scale repairs. It could be called a “bold” aspect of facilities management, looking at the entire Embassy to refresh the interior and equipment once every few dozen years.



Consular visitor space (left: before refurbishment; right: after refurbishment)

■ Routine inspection and upkeep maintaining the standards people expect

Large-scale refurbishments to suit changes in the era and requirements are important, but routine upkeep of facilities is also critical. Viet Nam experiences high humidity throughout the year, with a typical level of 100% in summer and many days exceeding 80% humidity even in winter. Staff therefore always use the air conditioning while at work, and faults with it will quickly affect Embassy activities. It is necessary to pay careful attention to maintenance to prevent such malfunctions, and be ready to carry out rapid repairs in the event of problems.

This is just one example, but the essence of ongoing maintenance work is maintaining the standards people expect. In any facilities — not just an Embassy — people cannot function satisfactorily if services such as power and water are not available. However, if someone does not maintain them, appropriate supply will not be sustained, and Embassy work will no longer be possible. This is “subtle” work carried out little by little every day, but it is essential to avoid any impediment to Embassy activities. Embassy staff are grateful to us, and I believe it is very rewarding work.

MOFA 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).

References

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_000365.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

2025

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

