

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.

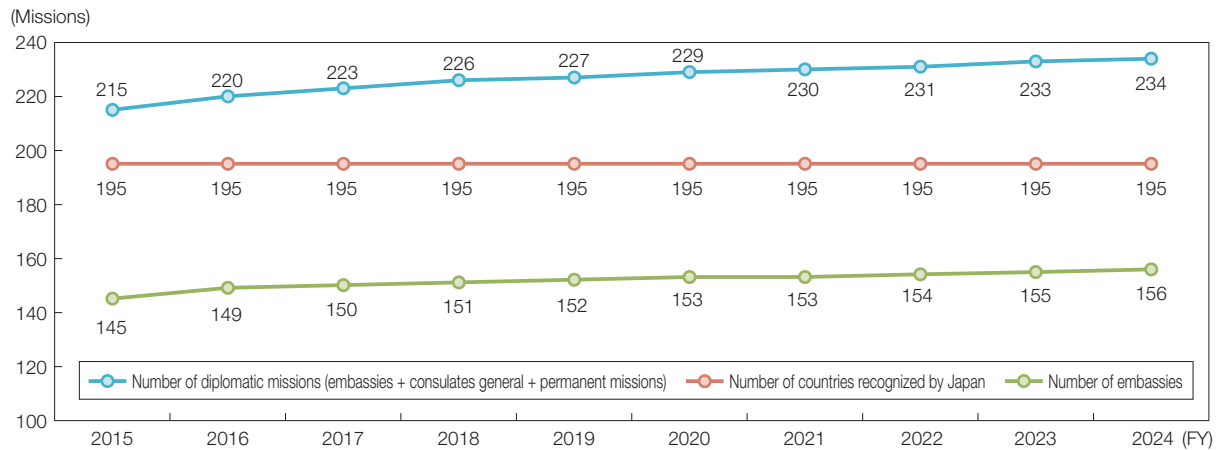
Nairobi is the location of international organization

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.

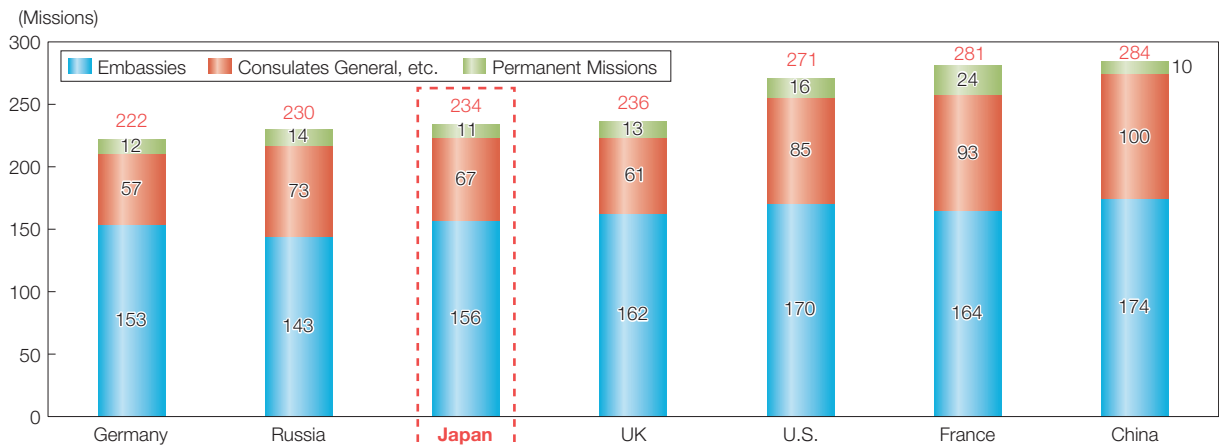
In addition to establishing more diplomatic missions overseas, it is important to secure and increase the number of staff members to support diplomacy at the MOFA headquarters and diplomatic missions overseas. In the context of the current severe budget and staff situation for the Government overall, 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



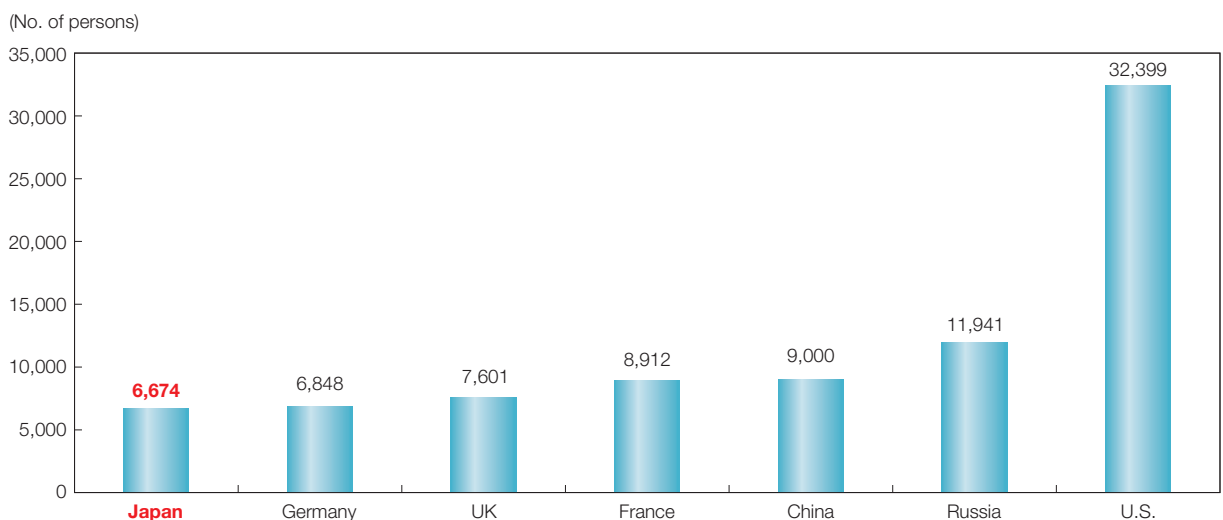
Comparison of the Number of Diplomatic Missions of Japan with Major Countries (P5 + Germany)



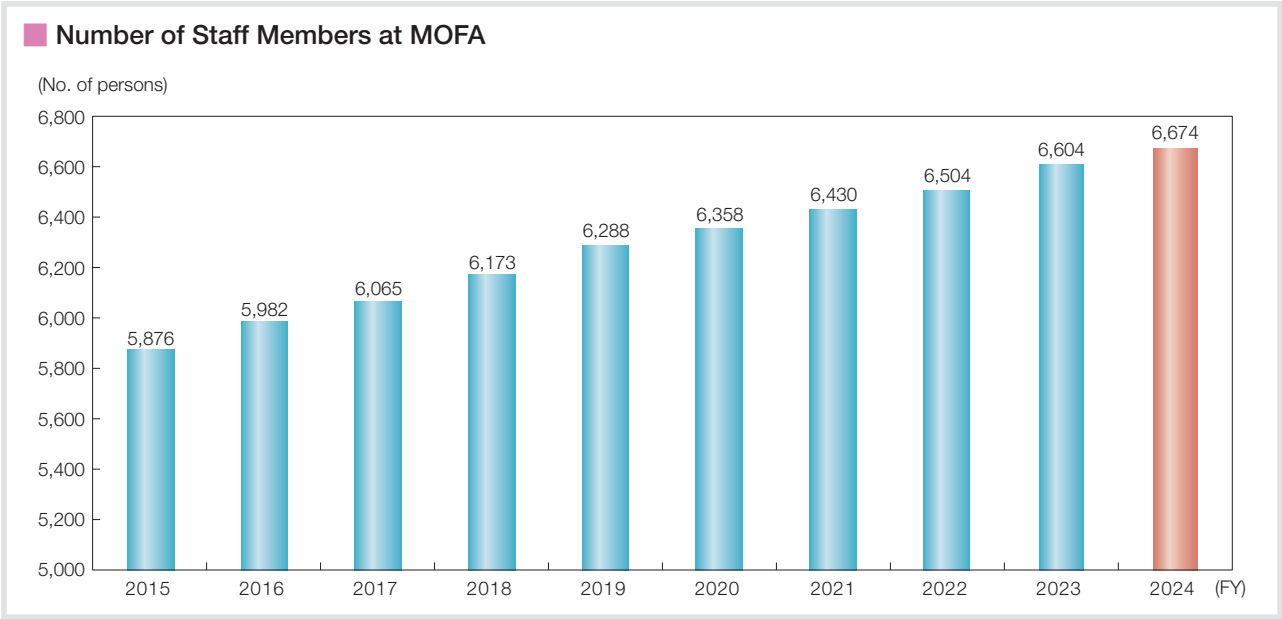
As of January 2025

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 (JIJA)⁽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

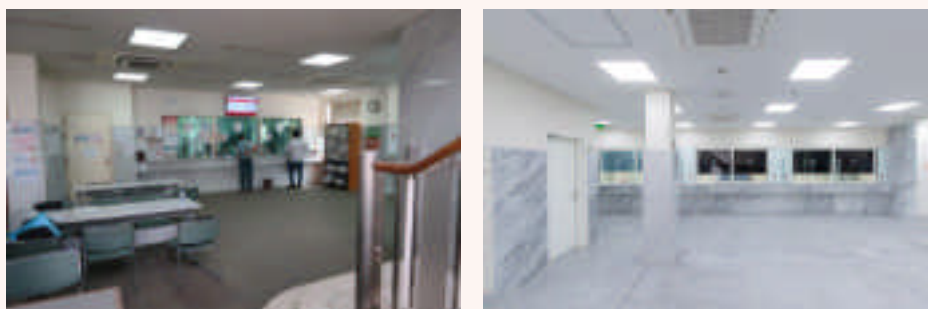
Were you aware of the roles at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) known as “technical officials?” As the “face of Japan,” overseas establishments such as Japanese embassies abroad provide the bases and settings for Japan's diplomatic activities, and they serve as the last strongholds for protecting 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).