

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 MOFA's Contribution toward Realizing a Society of Well-Ordered and Harmonious Coexistence with Foreign Nationals

(1) Overview

In July, the “Office for a Society of Well-Ordered and Harmonious Coexistence with Foreign Nationals” was established within the Cabinet Secretariat as the secretariat organization that serves as the central administrative body for the Government’s policies on foreign nationals, with MOFA also participating. In November, the first meeting of the “Ministerial Council on the Acceptance of Foreign Nationals and the Realization of a Society of Well-Ordered and Harmonious Coexistence” was held, attended by Foreign Minister Motegi. It is a fact that there are sectors that require foreign human resources amid a labor shortage due to population decline, and inbound tourism is also important. On the other hand, it is also a fact that situations have arisen in which members of the public feel anxiety and a sense of unfairness regarding illegal acts and rule violations by some foreign nationals. MOFA will continue to play an active role in realizing a society of well-ordered and harmonious coexistence with foreign nationals, in coordination with related ministries and agencies.

(2) Visa System

The number of international visitors to Japan in 2025 set a new all-time record. With the aim of contributing appropriately to the promotion of Japan as a tourism-oriented country and the acceptance of foreign nationals, while maintaining both smooth visa operations and rigorous visa screening with a view to preventing the entry of persons who intend to engage in crime or illegal work, or who may become victims of human trafficking, MOFA continues to work on developing the necessary physical and human frameworks and streamlining related operations.

Furthermore, MOFA has been implementing strategic relaxation measures regarding visas for short-term

stays, taking into comprehensive consideration the impact on Japan’s immigration control and public safety, the economic ripple effects of promoting people-to-people exchange with various countries and regions, the promotion of mutual understanding, and the strengthening of relations with the counterpart countries and regions, while conducting close coordination among related ministries and agencies and carefully making the final determination of the government. In 2025, visa exemption arrangements were introduced for nationals of Paraguay and Montenegro, and the maximum period of stay permitted under visa exemption for nationals of the United Arab Emirates was extended from 30 days to 90 days. Furthermore, from the perspective of further promoting youth exchange with various countries, the Working Holiday Programs with Slovakia, Germany, Ireland, and the Republic of Korea were revised to allow participants from the counterpart countries to participate up to twice in their lifetimes compared to the previous once-in-a-lifetime arrangement.

(3) Measures Related to Accepting Foreign Human Resources

As one of the initiatives aimed at accepting foreign human resources and improving the environment for doing so, MOFA participates in preparing Memorandums of Cooperation (MOC) that set out a framework for information partnerships with the sending countries of the workers under the “Specified Skilled Worker” system (established in April 2019), and in bilateral discussions based on those MOCs. Following the amendment made in 2024 to establish the new Employment for Skill Development Program to replace the existing Technical Intern Training Program, MOFA is also working in collaboration with related ministries and agencies toward the implementation of this new program in 2027.

2 Japanese Playing an Important Role in the International Community

(1) Japanese Playing an Important Role in International Organizations

International organizations are founded to serve the common interest of the international community. People of various nationalities work at these international organizations, drawing on their skills and traits to create an environment where people of the world can enjoy peace and 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 peace-building, energy, disaster management, labor, human rights and humanity, gender equality issues, etc. Talented individuals with expertise, passion and capabilities to contribute to the world's interests are needed so that international organizations can competently perform their tasks and fulfill their expected roles. Japan makes policy contributions as a member country of these international organizations, as well as financial contributions through assessed and voluntary contributions, and the activities and services of Japanese staff are also an important part of Japan's contributions. Additionally, a larger number of talented Japanese people playing important roles in international organizations will further enhance Japan's presence in the international community. Japanese staff are involved in various fields and duties at different locations, but they share the common mission of solving various issues facing the international community. Moreover, increasing the number of Japanese who work at international organizations as well as undertaking an important role on the global stage will in turn lead to enrichment of Japan's human resources and contribute to the development of Japan as a whole.

Currently, many Japanese nationals are playing important roles in international organizations, including in the United Nations (UN). Among the 15 UN specialized agencies, Mr. METOKI Masahiko has been serving as Director General of the International Bureau

— the top position — of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) since January 2022 (re-elected in September 2025), and Mr. ONUMA Toshiyuki has been serving as President of the Council — the top position — of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) since January 2026. (See the Column on page 344.) In addition, Japanese nationals serve as Presidents of both the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC), and Japan has continuously produced Japanese judges for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) since its establishment.

In light of the importance of international organizations in leading rule-making in an international society while addressing global challenges, securing leadership and other significant posts that contribute to strengthening ties between Japan and international organizations is a crucial challenge. It is necessary to make a finely tuned response by adopting a long-term perspective while cultivating suitable personnel, so that Japan can actively assist talented individuals with such positions.

The Government of Japan has set a target of 1,000 Japanese nationals working for UN-related agencies by 2025 with the aim of increasing Japanese personnel working at these organizations. To this end, in collaboration with universities, related ministries and agencies, and organizations, MOFA has actively engaged in scouting, training, and supporting Japanese nationals who have potential to play an important role in international organizations. Currently, 979 Japanese nationals (as of the end of 2024; 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 offers the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme, which dispatches young Japanese nationals who wish to work at international organizations for two years, providing them with the opportunity to gain professional experience and with the aim of gaining regular staff positions in such organizations after their term. MOFA also offers a program to support the promotion of Japanese nationals who has the

Column

Election of ONUMA Toshiyuki as Council President of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) established pursuant to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (the Chicago Convention), adopted in 1944. ICAO develops international rules across a wide range of aviation domains, including aviation safety and environmental protection. In recent years, it has also increasingly served as a forum for discussing geopolitical issues such as Russia's aggression against Ukraine and North Korea's missile launches.

ICAO's supreme decision-making body is the Assembly, which is convened once every three years and in which all 193 member states and regions participate. Beneath it sits the permanent Council, composed of 36 member states elected by the Assembly, which deliberates on and adopts international standards, and the Secretariat, which supports ICAO's operations. Following Japan's accession to ICAO in October 1953, Japan joined the Council in 1956 and has since continuously served as a Council member, contributing to ICAO through policymaking, funding, and human resources.

In ICAO, unlike many other international organizations where the Secretary General is the head of the organization, the Council President, who chairs the Council composed of representatives from member states, is positioned as ICAO's top authority.

In January 2024, the Government of Japan decided to nominate ONUMA Toshiyuki, then Senior Deputy Director-General of the Civil Aviation Bureau of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, as Japan's candidate for the next election for the Council President, with a view to further strengthening Japan's contributions to ICAO, which is becoming increasingly important. Mr. Onuma joined the then-Ministry of Transport in 1992 and has accumulated more than 30 years of experience as a legal expert conversant with aviation policy, dedicating himself to the development of international aviation. He also brings experience from a two-year posting to the ICAO Legal Bureau as a Junior Professional Officer (JPO)¹ between 2001 and 2003, and from December 2024 onwards served as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Delegation of Japan to ICAO, actively contributing to deliberations and earning high regard and trust from member states.

Following his nomination, the Government of Japan actively solicited support from relevant countries, while Mr. Onuma himself also engaged in activities to promote his vision to member states. As a result, he was elected as the next President of the ICAO Council at the election held in Montreal, Canada,



Mr. Onuma's speech at the reception (November 27, Montreal, Canada)



Gavel Passing Ceremony to Mr. Onuma (November 28, Montreal, Canada; Photo: the ICAO Secretariat)

on November 26, 2025. This marks the first time in ICAO's approximately 80-year history since its founding that a Council President from the Asia-Pacific region has been elected.

During his term as Council President from 2026 to 2028, Mr. Onuma has pledged to work on the operation of ICAO under three pillars: strengthening ICAO's core mission of pursuing safe and sustainable international aviation; ICAO as a global platform; and promoting the rule of law. The Government of Japan also intends to work in close coordination with ICAO under President Onuma's leadership, and to continue contributing to the development and implementation of international standards in the field of international civil aviation.

¹ Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme: A scheme under which international organizations accept young personnel funded by their respective national governments, for the purpose of supporting their employment at international organizations, such as the UN. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs began dispatching Japanese nationals under this scheme in 1974.

Column

Voices of Japanese Staff Who Have Been Supporting Activities of the United Nations Pursuing a United Nations (UN) Career in quest of the Prevention and Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts

GOTOH Kayoko, Director, Europe and Central Asia Division, UN Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations

It has now been three and a half years since I took up my current position as Director for Europe and Central Asia at the UN Secretariat's Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and Department of Peace Operations (DPO). The post was advertised in the autumn of 2021, and I was appointed in late February the following year — just days after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. That event marked a profound shift in the European security framework, posed a direct challenge to the basic principles of the UN Charter, and drove deep fractures into the international community. With this, what I thought would be a relatively calm job primarily dealing with “frozen” conflicts had turned into a demanding daily struggle grappling with how the UN should handle the war in Ukraine and other resurging conflict risks — or, to put it more broadly, what the UN's very “*raison d'être*” should look like going forward.

When I took up my appointment, long-standing colleagues observed, “This job feels like a culmination of your entire career at the UN.” I found that remark apt. Having started 34 years ago as a Junior Professional Officer (JPO), I feel genuinely fortunate to have led a career spanning eight duty stations and ten departments/agencies — having such diverse experiences is quite unusual and, I consider, constitutes a unique “strengths” for me as a UN professional. No matter what different new roles I challenged myself with, however, one thing remained constant: my aspiration, ever since I first embarked on my UN career, to contribute to the “prevention and peaceful resolution of conflict.” Across all 14 posts leading up to my current position, I have been able to engage with this central theme from a wide range of perspectives.

Of all my experiences, what left the deepest impression was to serve in the “field.” There, every day brought new challenges as I pursued the ideals upheld by the UN in the midst of turbulent conflict zones — whether working in UN peacekeeping operations (PKO) in Afghanistan and Timor-Leste or post-conflict reconstruction in the Balkans. And then there was the work at Headquarters: translating the needs and challenges of the field into the grand arena of “international politics,” where the interests of Member States collide. In particular, serving as a Political Affairs Officer in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and supporting the UN's top leadership has taught me the importance of assessing each issue with a broad, strategic view of the organization's overall priorities and interconnections — an experience that, I feel, laid a foundation underpinning my capacity as a senior manager today. Beyond the Secretariat, my parent organization, I also gained experience through secondments to other entities within the UN system. At the UN Development Programme (UNDP), I worked on policy coordination to facilitate the transition from conflict to development; at the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), I oversaw global program operations supporting the fight against transnational crime and terrorism; and at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), I was able to engage with disarmament for the first time. Disparate as these roles may appear, they, to me, were each woven together around the common theme of “conflict” — and I believe that if any single one were missing, or if the balance in the diverse mix were disrupted, I would not be who I am today.

Shortly after I joined the UN, I heard advice relayed from then Secretary-General Kofi Annan: “Move!” — meaning that anyone building a career in the UN should strive to gain experience in a wide variety of roles in a wide variety of settings. Today, this is known as “Mobility,” and it has become a cornerstone of UN human resources policy. Through well-balanced “Moves” across field, Headquarters, and UN system postings, I am now well positioned to do the work that I find genuinely meaningful. Looking back on this journey, I feel that I have managed, to some degree, to embody this guidance of the former Secretary-General I so admire.

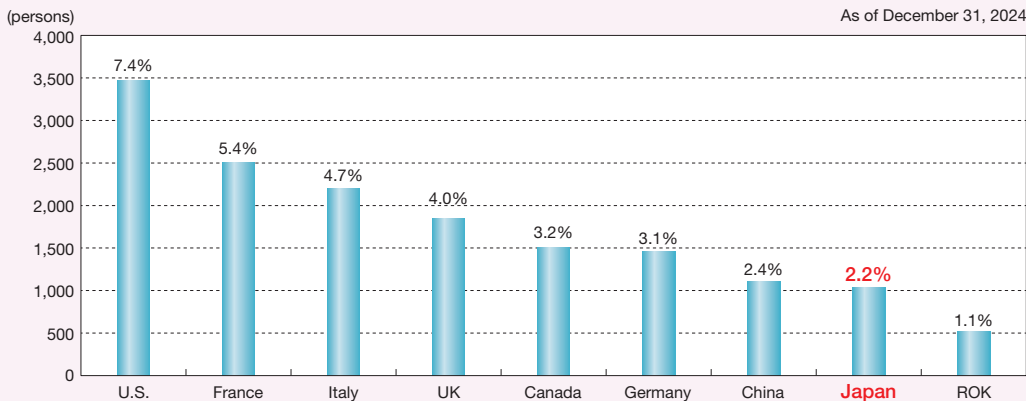


Attending a conference hosted by the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs on women's and youth political participation (the author is second from left in the front row, May, Kyiv, Ukraine)



Briefing the UN Security Council on the situation in Ukraine (the author is third from right in the front row, November)

■ 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 (46,585).
Note 3: Calculation method differs from that of MOFA.

Source: Created by MOFA from UN document (CEB/2025/HLCM/HR/11)

potential to fulfill managerial roles at international organizations by offering them mid-career level professional opportunity. In addition to increasing Japanese personnel 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 at international organizations, the MOFA Recruitment Center for International Organizations continually provides information on vacancy announcements at international organizations on its official website and through mailing lists, social media such as Facebook, X, LinkedIn, and Instagram, as well as YouTube. The Center also focuses on providing assistance regarding post applications. In addition, the Center holds seminars explaining the attractiveness of working at international organizations and methods of getting a job there, and also online and in-person explanatory sessions inviting senior Japanese staff 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

Japanese international cooperation NGOs are strategic partners in international cooperation, under Japan's "visible international cooperation," that provide support at the grassroots level that is difficult for the Government and international organizations to reach.

Through NGOs, MOFA actively provides Official Development Assistance (ODA) 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 education and human resource development, medical and health care, disaster risk reduction, water and sanitation, rural development, support for people with disabilities, and clearing landmines and unexploded ordnances (UXO). In FY2024, MOFA provided funding for 102 projects to 53 organizations implementing Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects in 36 countries and 1 region in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. Moreover, the Government provides NGO Project Subsidies to Japanese NGOs, supporting project formulation for development cooperation projects implemented by NGOs themselves, post-implementation project evaluations, and activities that contribute to the expansion of international cooperation activities.

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 50 NGO members as of December 2025. (See the Column on page 348.) In 2025, JPF launched programs that included assistance to earthquake victims in central Myanmar, assistance to victims of flooding in Pakistan, emergency assistance for famine in Gaza, and assistance to earthquake victims in eastern Afghanistan. In addition, JPF provided support to refugees and internally displaced persons in Syria, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Myanmar, Thailand, Ethiopia, Sudan, Ukraine, and Gaza.

MOFA provides support for NGO activities through various programs 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, and publishes the specific outcomes of these measures on the MOFA website. In 2025, MOFA implemented four programs to improve the environment for NGO activities: the “NGO Consultant,” “NGO Study Program,” “NGO Intern Program,” and “NGO Study Group.”

Regarding the NGO-MOFA Regular Consultation Meeting, the purpose of which is to promote dialogue and coordination between NGOs and MOFA, in FY2024, the plenary meeting was held in June 2024, and the “Partnership Promotion Committee” and “ODA Policy Council” meetings were held in July and December of the same year and in March 2025, at which lively exchanges of views took place.

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 explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) 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 by NGOs and others for atomic bomb survivors and others to convey the realities of the atomic bombings to people around the world. As of December 2025, a total of 335 Special Communicators on 113 occasions and a total of 834 Youth Communicators on 60 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 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 International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, Experts, and Others

The Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs, also known as the 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 in and contribute to the economic and social development of developing countries through living, working and fostering mutual understanding with local residents. As of the end of March 2025, a total of 57,442 JOCVs have been dispatched to 99 countries since the program's launch in 1965. The dispatched volunteers have been engaged in approximately 180 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

Column

Building the Future through a Circle of Support: 25th Anniversary of the Foundation of Japan Platform



Japan Platform (JPF) was established in 2000 as a globally unique emergency humanitarian assistance platform in which NGOs, the business community, and the Government of Japan operate in equal partnership. Since its founding, JPF has continued to deliver rapid and effective assistance from Japan to victims of natural disasters and to refugees and displaced persons affected by conflict, marking its 25th anniversary in 2025.

The three defining characteristics of JPF's operations are "rapidity," "expertise," and "transparency." JPF's strengths lie in its organizational structure enabling it to decide on rapid deployment on the very day a disaster strikes; in leveraging the specialized expertise of its 50 member NGOs currently active (as of December 2025); and in delivering comprehensive assistance tailored to local needs across areas such as healthcare, food and supplies, water and sanitation, education, psychosocial support, agriculture, and livelihood recovery. Quality and accountability of support are also ensured through reviews and monitoring that include external experts.

With regard to the Ukraine crisis that began in February 2022, JPF has been supporting communities facing prolonged displacement as the war continues to take a severe toll on people's lives and infrastructure. Drawing on international analysis and in coordination with NGOs active on the ground, JPF has deployed assistance that leverages the strengths of each member NGO through country- and region-specific short-, medium-, and long-term strategies (response plans).

In the earthquake that struck central Myanmar in March, member NGOs that had already been providing support to internally displaced persons following the 2021 coup d'état launched emergency response operations and needs assessments from the same day as the disaster, delivering life-saving rapid response and early recovery assistance.

In the Gaza Strip, Palestine, JPF has secured humanitarian aid routes under challenging conditions for delivering aid, with many NGOs carrying out food and supplies distribution. The meticulous work of Japanese NGOs has earned high praise for its respect for local culture.

In regions experiencing protracted humanitarian crises, including Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Syria, JPF continues to provide assistance that respects the identity and dignity of local communities.

As a "platform for assistance," JPF has continued to grow as a space where anyone can direct their concern and join the circle of support. Since its establishment, more than 6,000 companies have participated through donations and service provision, and further collaboration is anticipated to meet the increasingly diverse needs of those requiring assistance.

In order to connect the front lines of assistance with society at large and promote the resolution of challenges, JPF has also devoted considerable effort to working with media organizations, achieving a wide range of communications. Sharing the common purpose of protecting lives and human dignity, JPF continues to pursue forms of reporting and assistance that generate synergy.

To date, JPF has implemented more than 2,400 assistance projects totaling approximately 96.7 billion Japanese yen across more than 65 countries and regions. Behind each of those figures are people who, just like us, live their lives with family and friends. With the aim of building a society in which all people can shape their own futures and live in security — and so that the children of the next generation may live with hope for a peaceful and happy future — JPF will continue to promote diverse partnerships and expand the circle of support in which more people can take part.



Local staff distributing food and the people of Gaza receiving it (assistance provided under the Gaza Assistance Program "Emergency Response to Gaza Humanitarian Crisis / Emergency Response to Gaza Famine" ©NICCO/WCK)



"Global Festa JAPAN 2025," where JPF helped promote awareness of Japan's people-centered humanitarian assistance in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (©JPF)

Column

60th Anniversary of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Overseas Cooperation Volunteers

■ 60th Anniversary Commemorative Ceremony for the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers

The Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) marked their 60th anniversary in 2025, and a commemorative ceremony was held on November 13 in the presence of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress. In the first part of the ceremony, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs ERI Arfiya read a congratulatory message on behalf of Prime Minister Takaichi. The message commended the activities of the JOCVs over the past 60 years, expressed hope for the continued active contributions of returned volunteers, and stated that the trust and bonds built up by the JOCVs are invaluable assets. In the second part, returned volunteers took to the stage to introduce a range of ways in which they have been contributing to society since returning to Japan. The ceremony provided an opportunity to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the JOCV, to look back on their history, and to reaffirm its significance.



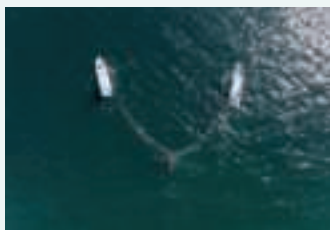
His Majesty the Emperor delivering his remarks at the 60th Anniversary Commemorative Ceremony for the JOCVs (Photo: JICA)

■ Voices of JOCV Alumni — “From Field Knowledge in Burkina Faso to a System for Reducing Marine Debris” Dispatched to Burkina Faso, Specialty: Environmental Education (2017–2019) — EGAWA Yuki

During my travels as a student, the sight of waste piling up unprocessed made me think about what could be done to address the waste problem. In 2017, I was dispatched to Burkina Faso as a JOCV in the field of environmental education, where I worked with schools and local governments to conduct awareness-raising activities in educational settings and to organize community clean-ups. At the same time, I faced the reality that there was no final disposal site, and so I helped construct a rudimentary landfill. Through this experience, I learned that combining “soft” approaches, such as education, with “hard” approaches, such as infrastructure, is one way to move toward a solution. I also recognized the need to build systems that do not rely on volunteers alone, and to work as an organization. Through repeated dialogue with local authorities, a cycle of trial and error, and the accumulation of lessons learned through failure, I came to realize that the key to drawing in people who previously had no interest was “a grand vision that resonates with people’s hearts and the drive to actually move it forward.”



Waste awareness-raising activity at a kindergarten conducted as a JOCV (the author at the center; February 2019, Koudougou, Burkina Faso; Photo: EGAWA Yuki)



Joint pilot demonstration for marine debris collection, in which microplastics were collected off Shodoshima Island (September 2024, Shodoshima Island, Kagawa Prefecture; Photo: cubic-rr [島空撮])

After returning to Japan, drawing on my overseas experience in waste management, I established the NPO Clean Ocean Ensemble and began tackling the issue of marine debris, with Shodoshima Island in Kagawa Prefecture as my base.

Working in partnership with fishers, local authorities, businesses, and citizens, I have been pursuing an integrated approach that encompasses the development of debris collection technologies for ocean and river environments, the visualization of the amount of marine debris collected, and the recycling of the collected debris. My goal is to elevate marine debris collection from a mere volunteer activity into an endeavor of economic and social value, and to build a system in which the quantified amount of debris collected exceeds the amount flowing into the ocean. We are also working to add value to these activities from technological and scientific perspectives, while reviewing the organization’s management so that the initiative can be sustained as a viable operation.

Thanks to the encouragement and support of many people, our activities have steadily evolved, the number of partner organizations has grown, and the volume of marine debris collected and recycled has increased year by year. The lessons I gained as a JOCV remain with me to this day. Starting from small activities in the field; continuing to be creative with what is available, drawing people in with a grand vision and the drive to act on it, building systems little by little, accumulating small successes amid many failures, and passing them on to the next generation — this continuous effort is, I believe, the path that will surely reduce the waste flowing into the ocean and lead us to a “world with zero marine debris.”

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 349.) 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. In FY2024, JICA experts were dispatched to 108 countries and regions based on 1,951 new and ongoing contracts (with a total of 10,055 expert and survey dispatches combined).

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.



Reception co-hosted with the Governor of Gunma Prefecture (February 19, Iikura Guest House, MOFA, Tokyo)



Reception co-hosted with the Governor of Nagano Prefecture (March 18, Iikura Guest House, MOFA, Tokyo)

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 with Gunma Prefecture in February, with Nagano Prefecture in March, and with Toyama Prefecture in October, creating opportunities to promote further exchange between the respective prefectures and participants including diplomatic corps in Japan. At the reception co-hosted with Gunma Prefecture, State Minister for Foreign Affairs FUJII Hisayuki, attending on behalf of Foreign Minister Iwaya, noted that “Traditional knowledge and skills of sake-making with koji mold



Reception co-hosted with the Governor of Toyama Prefecture (October 15, Iikura Guest House, MOFA, Tokyo)

in Japan” had been inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and stated that the Ministry would make every possible effort to promote the appeal of Japanese alcoholic beverages to the world, including the local *sake* of Gunma Prefecture. The reception also featured booths introducing agricultural, forestry and fishery products, local *sake*, traditional crafts, and tourism including hot spring resorts from across the prefecture, as well as a stage performance by a local high school dance club. At the reception co-hosted with Nagano Prefecture, Foreign Minister Iwaya stated that MOFA is working on regional revitalization — including efforts to expand sales channels for Japanese *sake* and agricultural products and to attract inbound tourism — by making full use of the Iikura Guest House and diplomatic missions overseas and in cooperation with local governments — and called for cooperation in promoting the appeal of Nagano Prefecture’s food and traditional crafts to the world. The reception featured a variety of booths introducing Nagano Prefecture’s

initiatives related to tourism, food, traditional crafts, and health and longevity, as well as stage performances featuring a soba noodle-making demonstration and a performance by Togakure-ryu ninja. At the reception co-hosted with Toyama Prefecture, Foreign Minister Iwaya stated that MOFA is focusing on expanding exports of Japanese *sake* and food products by making use of the Iikura Guest House and diplomatic missions overseas and in cooperation with local governments, and called for cooperation in promoting the appeal of Toyama Prefecture’s cuisine — including sushi — and traditional crafts to the world. The reception featured a variety of booths introducing Toyama Prefecture’s food, *sake*, tourism, traditional crafts, its well-being (happiness) initiatives and reconstruction and recovery efforts following the earthquake disaster, and included a stage performance of “Owara Kaze no Bon.”

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



Scene from the first-session presentations at the “Regional Promotion Seminar” held on January 20



Diplomatic corps visiting the Kamikatsu Zero Waste Center (Diplomats’ Study Tour) (July 9, Kamikatsu Town, Tokushima Prefecture)



Scene from the second-session networking reception at the “Regional Promotion Seminar” held on November 10



Diplomatic corps taking a commemorative photograph with the Mayor of Matsuura City and others (Diplomats’ Study Tour) (September 30, Matsuura City, Nagasaki Prefecture)

members of diplomatic corps to Japan, foreign chambers of commerce and industry, related companies, and other organizations. On January 20, a seminar was held in Tokyo jointly with Sakai City, Osaka Prefecture; Okinawa Prefecture; Nikko City, Tochigi Prefecture; and Kamikatsu Town, Tokushima Prefecture. On November 10, a further seminar was held jointly with Fukui Prefecture; Masuda City, Shimane Prefecture; Hamada City, Shimane Prefecture; and Karuizawa Town, Nagano Prefecture. The seminars featured presentations on regional attractions, introductions to local specialties, tourist spots, and local industries through exchange sessions with participants, as well as demonstrations of traditional performing arts. These seminars were received by attendees as valuable opportunities to directly experience the attractiveness of regional Japan while being in Tokyo, and they also contributed to promoting exchanges among local governments and participants from the diplomatic corps, among others.

Furthermore, MOFA and Japanese local governments co-organize “Diplomats’ Study Tours” for the diplomatic corps in Japan, with the goal of enabling them to directly experience the attractions of each region by actually visiting them. Co-hosted with the Union of Kansai Governments, a tour of Tokushima Prefecture, Hyogo Prefecture, and Kyoto Prefecture titled “Tour exploring the symbiosis of nature and civilization in the Kansai region” was held on July 9 and 10. Through visits to sites showcasing advanced initiatives and technologies for coexisting with nature, the tour introduced the diverse attractions of the Kansai region. A tour of Matsuura City, Nagasaki Prefecture titled “Home of Aji Fry × Underwater Archaeology Sanctuary – An Experience Tour of Local Attractions” was held on September 30 and October 1, providing diplomatic corps in Japan with opportunities to see, experience, and taste the city’s diverse regional resources. A tour of Bizen City and Setouchi City, Okayama Prefecture titled “Experience the Timeless Art of Craftmanship” was held on October 30 and 31. Through visits to facilities related to Bizen ware and Bizen swords, among other sites, the tour introduced the diverse attractions of both cities, including their tourism, history, food, and local specialty products.

Moreover, MOFA holds the “Local Partnership Cooperation Forum” as a venue for providing local



Diplomatic corps visiting the former Shizutani School (Diplomats’ Study Tour) (October 30, Bizen City, Okayama Prefecture)



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”

governments with explanations of Japan’s current diplomatic policies, etc., that relate closely to international exchange activities at the regional level. In FY2025, the Forum was held in February 2026.

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 from October 2025 to March 2026. The 33 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 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. By also utilizing Key Opinion Leaders (KOL) and influencers, these initiatives convey the attraction of Japan's regions to many people.

Furthermore, MOFA conducted 11 "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 2025, the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor receptions were held in-person at 245 diplomatic missions overseas, 116 of which promoted the attractiveness of Japan's regions.

Furthermore, MOFA has been supporting various international exchanges between Japanese local governments and their overseas counterparts through a range of initiatives. 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 for the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020, or deliver lectures prior to their departure for new posts or when they temporarily return to Japan. In cases where any foreign local governmental bodies wish to newly establish sister-city relationships with any Japanese municipal communities, MOFA supports them by providing the related information to the respective prefectures and ordinance-designated cities, and conducting indirect support by promoting these regional cooperation initiatives on the website of "Local Partnership

Cooperation" (named "Glocal (global and local) Diplomatic Network"⁽¹⁾) on MOFA's website.

In addition to the "Glocal Diplomatic Network," as public relations media for showcasing regional cooperation initiatives, MOFA also distributes Monthly Glocal News,⁽²⁾ a monthly e-mail newsletter, and posts information via X.⁽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*, *shochu*, *awamori*, wine, 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 dignitaries 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 also actively call attention to the fact that "Traditional knowledge and skills of sake-making with koji mold in Japan" has been inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Furthermore, MOFA and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) are collaborating with local governments in the areas of development cooperation. They are working on forms of development cooperation in which the technologies and know-how of local governments contribute to solving challenges — for example, in the field of public services for local residents such as water and sewerage systems and waste disposal — by dispatching Japanese local government officials as experts or by engaging local government officials in projects for the construction and improvement of facilities.

(1) For the "Glocal Diplomatic Network," see MOFA's website: https://www.mofa.go.jp/ms/lpc/page25e_000167.html

(2) For "Monthly Glocal News," see MOFA's website: https://www.mofa.go.jp/ms/lpc/page25e_000219.html

(3) Local Partnership Cooperation Division, X: <https://twitter.com/localmofa>

