

Preface

Japan Foundation's Initiative in Promoting "Culture and Peacebuilding"

In today's world, one cannot draw the conclusion that peace prevails if there is no war between countries. Various flashpoints of conflicts still below the threshold of erupting into war are submerged in relationships among individuals, races and regions.

Taking this into account, the Japan Foundation believes that culture, arts and youth exchange can play multifaceted roles in building peaceful international and regional relations. From this standpoint, we reviewed our various cultural exchange programs conducted for the past few years and published a booklet in March 2008 titled "The Roles of Cultural Initiatives in Peacebuilding" with a focus on projects that contributed to peace through cultural activities.

From fiscal 2008, we launched a series of international symposiums with the Goethe-Institut, a non-profit German cultural exchange organization, with the aim of developing future-oriented programs by sharing and discussing the idea of "Fostering Peace through Cultural Initiatives" and reviewing our past projects.

In December 2008, we invited two guests from the Goethe-Institut, Dr. Hans-Georg Knopp, Secretary General, and Dr. Christoph Bartmann, the head of Culture and Information Department at its main office in Munich, to a preparatory meeting in Tokyo where we held intensive discussions on our past undertakings. Based on the outcomes, the Japan Foundation and the Goethe-Institut hosted a joint international symposium titled "Fostering Peace through Cultural Initiatives - Perspectives from Japan and Germany" on May 14th-15th 2009 in Tokyo, which was co-hosted by the Mainichi Newspapers. This report summarizes presentations and materials of this two-day event - the experts' conference on the first day and the public symposium on the following day.

Dr. Knopp and Dr. Bartmann again kindly accepted our invitation to the symposium on both days, where their regional directors from conflict areas - Afghanistan and Lebanon - and artists involved in their cultural initiative programs also participated. From Japan, artists and eminent persons from various circles who played an active role in addressing issues of peace and conflicts attended. Participants from both sides held lively and informative discussions.

We deeply appreciate Dr. Akiko Fukushima, a senior fellow at the Japan Foundation, for her assistance in our research and coordination work to publish the aforementioned booklet. We also would like to thank the Aoyama Gakuin University Joint Research Institute for International Peace and Culture for helping us organize this event.

We thank all presenters, sponsors and participants for their support and hope this report becomes a guidebook for future projects.

The Japan Foundation
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