

Fostering Cross-Cultural Understanding

The Japan Foundation seeks to emphasize the needs and goals of each international program, and sets objectives for operations in each target country and region. To ensure enhanced performance, we have appointed executive vice presidents on a regional basis.

Asia and Oceania



Sohei Yoshino
Executive Vice President

The year was marked by many ambitious projects that broke new ground. We sponsored the “Have We Met?” art exhibition, organized by a new generation of curators; brought Tokyo audiences contemporary drama by directors from five South Asian countries, a selection that brilliantly used multimedia; and sent a company of actors to East Timor refugee camps to entertain children affected by recent strife. In a move aptly summarizing this year of reform, applications for the head of the Foundation’s Beijing office were accepted from the public, and the position was filled by an individual from a corporate background.

The Americas



Hideya Taida, CBE
Executive Vice President

2004 marked the 150th anniversary of the first friendship treaty between Japan and the United States, and to honor that occasion we organized a wide range of symposiums looking back on the history of our relations. In terms of new frontiers, we hosted a symposium that explored relations between Japanese-Americans and Asian-Americans, their diversity and solidarity. After staging a revival of the 1976 musical *Pacific Overtures* on Broadway, we then set to work organizing a network of Japanese research fellows in Central and South America. As Japan and Mexico have successfully concluded negotiations on a free trade agreement, we look forward to seeing our cultural exchange programs continue to flourish and grow in the coming years.

Europe, Middle East, and Africa



Toru Kodaki
Executive Vice President

The Japanese pavilion at the Venice Biennale’s Ninth International Architecture Exhibition focused on the theme of “Otaku,” and it generated great excitement in the European art world with its unique vision of urban life. The display proved a big hit in Tokyo, too, upon its return home. Meanwhile, at the Foundation’s invitation, a contemporary company of actors from Iraq visited Japan in a three-city tour, and a group of players on the *oud*, the traditional Arab lute, led by Naseer Shamma of Iraq, performed in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Tokyo. The Middle East, the Foundation believes, is one of the regions where Japan most needs to engage in cultural exchange and enhanced mutual understanding. We therefore sent a cultural mission there for the second time, this year to Jordan and Iran.