

Opening Address

Hiroyasu Ando, President of the Japan Foundation

It is an unparalleled pleasure for all of us at the Japan Foundation to be able to hold this award ceremony today in the presence of His Imperial Highness Crown Prince Naruhito. It is also a great honor to welcome Foreign Minister Koichiro Gamba to this ceremony.

And I would also like to express my profound appreciation for you all to be present here today. I know you are quite busy.

The Japan Foundation was established on October 2, 1972, and we celebrate its 40th anniversary this year. And since the following year—that is, 1973—we have been presenting these awards each year. Today, we are holding the 40th ceremony.

We received many recommendations from around the world this fiscal year, and I am happy to inform you that we have been able to choose two outstanding individuals and one organization after a careful screening by experts and specialists in various fields. Let me take this opportunity to thank all the people who have kindly made the recommendations, as well as all the members of the selection committee led by Chairman Yoshihiko Miyauchi.

It is due to the efforts and support of people throughout the world, including today's award recipients, that the Japan Foundation has been able to promote international cultural exchange for 40 long years. Today, we have some of the past award recipients here with us. They include Professor Donald Keene, who received his award in fiscal 1983. We consider it a great honor to be able to congratulate this year's recipients together with all of you.

We suffered the Great East Japan Earthquake last year. The entire world praised the calm response that Japanese people showed in the face of the devastation, as well as the spirit of mutual assistance we all witnessed in the regional society. We have received support and a variety of cooperation for our reconstruction efforts from across the world. And the eyes of the world are turning once again to Japan, anxious to see what kind of country we will build in the aftermath of the tragedy. We are convinced that the meeting of different cultures and the bond among different peoples

will create the wisdom that will open the way for the next generation and create new values. We at the Japan Foundation are resolved to remain at the forefront of international cultural exchange and advance toward the future, drawing on the advice and support we have received from all of you during the past 40 years and maintaining coordination and cooperation with individuals and organizations that are involved in international cultural exchange.

Let me conclude my address by wishing you, the award recipients and all the others in this room, a great success and prosperity in the years to come. Thank you.