

# Cultivating mutual understanding by promoting interpersonal interaction through the universal medium of culture



▲ Ogoura Kazuo, President  
The Japan Foundation.

The Japan Foundation serves as a catalyst for international communication in such fields as arts and culture, Japanese-language education, overseas Japanese studies and intellectual exchange, with the aim of contributing to world peace by promoting dialogue and interaction between Japanese and other peoples through the medium of culture. It is the only organization in Japan engaged in international cultural exchange in every region of the world.

Ever since it was founded in 1972, the Foundation has promoted people-to-people exchanges by implementing international cultural exchange programs. Having made a fresh start as an independent administrative institution in October 2003, it has lately been striving to conduct its programs more effectively by reforming its structure, personnel, and programs.

One of our new initiatives is the development of medium- to long-term regional strategies. In 2005 we formulated five-year plans for cultural exchange with China and South Korea and established planning offices to implement them, with the aim of alleviating friction between Japan and these countries. We also established a fund of ¥10 billion to facilitate new exchange programs with China. In one of our projects in the Middle East, meanwhile, children's books were donated to Iraqi children as a way of encouraging deeper understanding of Japan in a broad sense.

We have also begun implementing a new vision of cultural diplomacy in which cultural exchange is utilized to promote peace. As part of our new efforts to Japan to extend cultural assistance to regions undergoing reconstruction, we invited potters from the Istalif district of Afghanistan, a renowned center of ceramics production, and provided them with opportunities to observe Japanese ceramics arts and techniques, and to exchange opinions with representatives of the Japanese ceramics world.

One of the Foundation's longer-term challenges is to strengthen its overseas network. We are striving to respond flexibly to demands from around the world by making effective use of our limited resources.

This annual report outlines the programs conducted by the Japan Foundation in fiscal year 2005, as well as providing financial, organizational, and statistical information. It is my sincere hope that through this report, readers will gain a fresh perspective on how the Foundation undertakes a wide range of activities transcending time and space in all corners of the globe.