

President's Message



December 2007
Ogoura Kazuo, President
The Japan Foundation

Today, the very existence of public service organizations, including independent administrative institutions, is being called into question more than ever before. Since being granted the status of an independent administrative institution in October 2003, the Japan Foundation has devoted efforts to implementing reforms in the content of our activities and our operating methods. These reforms have not merely been aimed at improving efficiency, but were born from the firm conviction that it is also necessary not only to further enhance our activities, but to redefine the role played by the Japan Foundation in international cultural exchange.

At the same time, it is clear from trends around the world, that the degree of interest in Japan remains as high as ever. For example, the number of Japanese-language learners has grown to 2.98 million people, a figure that continues to increase annually. In many countries, there is a pressing need to train and develop Japanese-language instructors, and the Japan Foundation is mandated to address this need. At the Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute in Urawa, we train overseas instructors of the Japanese language, and provide information and materials on Japanese-language education through the Internet. Furthermore, we administer the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test in countries and regions around the world, and aim to create international standards for Japanese-language education.

In addition, in order to deepen understanding of Japan overseas, from a long-term perspective, we recognize that it is essential to cultivate researchers in Japanese studies who will share their knowledge and, in so doing, bring about wider understanding of Japan. Through the Japan Foundation Fellowships as well as other means, we have helped nurture a great number of scholars and researchers. The beneficiaries of our support include individuals with leading roles in their various countries of origin.

Contemporary Japanese culture is the subject of widespread interest around the world, whether it is in the form of *manga*, animé, J-pop, modern Japanese culture, or youth culture. There are, also many individuals who maintain an interest in Japan's traditional culture, which is the source of many aspects of modern cultural phenomena. It has never before been so important to use culture and the arts as a means to respond to these people's interests and enthusiasms as they seek to discover the true spirit of Japan. I believe it is also our mission to foster common sources of creativity around the world, through international exchange activities.

Finally, culture is an essential factor in building peace. We will continue to treat with the utmost importance, the idea that cultural exchange can play a significant role in building global peace. Our efforts in the future will, as in the past, encompass

a variety of approaches. We will continue to implement cultural programs both to support conflict prevention efforts and to provide comfort to victims of conflict, thereby arousing hope as well as the desire to rebuild communities and countries that have experienced suffering. Also, we will extend cooperation in the protection of cultural assets in developing countries.

This Annual Report provides information on the progress we have achieved through our wide-ranging activities during fiscal year 2006.

We will continue to work with all of you in our endeavors to bring about a creative and peaceful world. I sincerely hope that you will continue to lend your support and understanding to our activities.

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Japanese names follow the practice of surname first. Romanization adheres to the Hepburn style with minor modifications; macrons indicate long vowels.