

Message from the President

Toward the Realization of a World in Which No One Will Be Left Behind



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Profile

Born in 1948. Graduated in law from the University of Tokyo. Obtained his PhD from the Graduate Schools for Law and Politics of the University of Tokyo. Has served as professor in the Faculty of Law of the University of Tokyo, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, deputy permanent representative of Japan to the United Nations (2004–6), professor at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS), and president of the International University of Japan. Appointed to his current post in October 2015.



In his first trip overseas after his appointment as president, Mr. Kitaoka visited Ethiopia and Kenya. In talks with the Ethiopian prime minister, they announced a further strengthening of their partnership toward the holding of TICAD VI.



In the Kenyan port of Mombasa, Mr. Kitaoka inspected a new terminal scheduled to be completed soon with a Japanese ODA Loan.

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A Year in Which Japan Undertook Initiatives to Meet the Expectations of the International Community

The modern world is becoming increasingly chaotic. Problems related to conflicts, violent extremism, poverty, disparities, infectious diseases, and natural disasters are threatening the lives and dignity of many people across national borders and around the world. In September 2015, the international community agreed upon the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at a United Nations summit and took a first step toward realizing a world in which no one is left out of the benefits of development. The philosophy of “human security,” which Japan has advocated for many years, is incorporated throughout the SDGs. In tackling the SDGs, Japan must display leadership as a global player in the international community. In this regard, JICA, a comprehensive development cooperation agency charged with implementing Japan’s ODA, has a grave responsibility.

At the G7 Ise-Shima Summit held in May of this year, with Japan serving as the chair, the G7 leaders discussed the important

challenges facing the world. Japan cited quality infrastructure, global health, and the empowerment of women as important issues, and the G7 Ise-Shima Leaders’ Declaration expressed their determination to take action to tackle these issues. Furthermore, at the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI), held in Kenya in August, the participants discussed issues that African countries and the international community should cooperate in addressing, such as their responses to the recent outbreak of Ebola virus disease, the proliferation of terrorism and violent extremism, and the drop in international resource prices.

In this way, beginning with the agreement on the SDGs, this has been an important year in which Japan has displayed initiative to meet the expectations of the international community. JICA must play a major role toward the realization of these commitments.

Reevaluating Japan’s Aid Philosophy and JICA’s Role

After the adoption of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005, “ownership” became something of a buzzword. Based on its own experiences before then, however, Japan was already adopting the stance that the main actors in a country’s economic development are that country’s people, placing importance on relations with people in the field and an approach of mutually learning from each other in an equal partnership. This approach has become the foundation of relations of trust between Japan and counterpart countries. From now on I think it will be necessary to set forth this approach more clearly as our philosophy of international cooperation and to announce it strategically.

Looking at JICA’s work once again from my position as president, I feel that JICA, as a comprehensive development cooperation agency at the center of Japan’s official development assistance (ODA), has established a good track record of assistance to developing countries. There must be few development cooperation agencies in the world that, like JICA, have a diverse range of functions and capabilities and can confront challenges in developing countries by combining a variety of menus. In addition to the construction of infrastructure through ODA Loans and Grants, JICA offers technical cooperation, including the building of human resources and systems.



In collaboration with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, JICA implemented an extensive polio vaccine campaign in Pakistan. (Photo: UNICEF/PAK2016/Waseem Niaz)



The Delhi Metro in India, constructed with assistance from JICA, fully opened in 2011. The subway network, which has the same scale as the Tokyo Metro, has become an indispensable means of transport for the citizens of Delhi. (Photo: Shinichi Kuno)

While we are seeing the appearance of many new donors, including newly emerging economies, new challenges are becoming evident, such as the emergence of new infectious diseases, violent extremism, and large numbers of refugees. As the number of actors involved in development cooperation

increases and the issues that should be addressed become more diverse, we should not be content with the status quo but rather ask how Japan's ODA can be utilized for the future. I believe that is the challenge for JICA at the moment.

Challenge of the New Framework: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

So, specifically, what should be done? Bearing in mind the results of our efforts so far, I would like us to turn our attention to the SDGs adopted in 2015.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which the international community concentrated on achieving for 15 years beginning in 2000, stipulated eight development goals, including eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, and reducing child mortality. A lot of progress has been made. For example, the population suffering poverty in developing countries has been reduced to one-third of the level in 2000, and the mortality rates for children and pregnant women have been halved. JICA also has achieved significant results. For example, we have been involved in the building of a quality educational environment for more than 26 million children throughout the world. Also, in collaboration with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, we provided polio vaccine for 28.8 million children in Pakistan. In Africa, we supplied safe drinking water and hygienic facilities for 17.61 million people. Furthermore, among these activities, outstanding systems initiated by Japan are spreading throughout the world. For instance, through JICA's assistance, the Maternal and Child Health Handbook has spread to more than 20 countries, and more than eight million are being issued every year, which is eight times more than the number issued in Japan.

Nevertheless, some of the goals have still not been achieved

in Africa and other regions. Domestic wealth gaps have widened even in countries that have made improvements, and also issues like climate change and natural disasters demand a response. Therefore, the SDGs were agreed upon in September 2015 as a framework to succeed the MDGs. The SDGs emphasize a balance between the three aspects necessary for sustainable development, namely economic, social, and environmental, and cite 17 goals that should be achieved by 2030. Furthermore, in a major difference from the previous framework, the goals cover the developed as well as the developing nations. Not only agencies involved in assistance to developing countries but also citizens, private companies, NGOs and NPOs, government organizations, and others in Japan are required to work together in making efforts to achieve the goals. As explained above, as an advocate of the realization of human security, Japan is in a position to lead the international community in its efforts to achieve the SDGs as well. Fully utilizing the experience, know-how, and networks that it has accumulated, JICA is playing a leading role in opening up this frontier.



Held in 2011 with assistance from JICA, the first national sports event in South Sudan since its independence saw athletes from different regions and ethnic groups competing in a spirit of fair play.



The world's first halal-certified sweet-bean-jam rice cakes went on sale in Malaysia. At a locally held international trade fair, they received favorable notices from Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, left. On the right is the president of Tokachi Seika Co., Ltd.

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Issues Being Tackled by JICA

As a specific response to the achievement of the SDGs, JICA so far has made efforts to contribute in the three areas of promoting quality growth, realizing peaceful and secure societies, and addressing global issues.

Promotion of “quality growth”

“Quality growth” emphasizes growth combining three factors: inclusiveness, in which the fruits of growth extend throughout society and no one is left behind; sustainability, in which proper consideration is given to the environment and social aspects and necessary measures are taken to carry over the fruits of growth for succeeding generations, including measures to combat global warming; and resilience, in which societies have a strong resistance to various shocks, such as economic crises and natural disasters. This is genuinely one of the targets that the SDGs are trying to achieve. As a good example of quality infrastructure emphasizing safety and environmental and social concerns, one can cite the Delhi Metro subway in India, which was financed by Japanese ODA. The Delhi Metro is used by 2.4 million people every day and has become a new means of transport for citizens. As a result, the number of vehicles on the roads in Delhi has been reduced by 120,000, so traffic congestion in the city has been relieved. Furthermore, Japan’s outstanding operation system technology, including subway safety measures and train maintenance, has been transferred to the Indian side.

Realization of a peaceful and secure society

Such risks as international terrorism, humanitarian issues in vulnerable states, and regional conflicts exert a serious social and economic impact on countries around the world, including Japan. As well as positive contributions to peacebuilding, it is important to share universal values through support for governance and the establishment of legislation. Recently a new attempt took place

as a means of promoting reconciliation among ethnic and tribal groups after a civil war. With assistance from JICA, the first national sports event since independence was held in South Sudan with the aim of promoting peace and unity. The realization of peace is no easy matter, but nevertheless more than 20,000 spectators turned up to cheer on the athletes, far more than expected. This spectacle made us aware once again of the power of sports to help restore trust among different ethnic and tribal groups.

Contribution to global issues

As a result of the advance of globalization, transborder global issues faced in common by humankind, such as climate change, large-scale natural disasters, and infectious diseases, are becoming increasingly evident. Bearing in mind the frameworks agreed upon at the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) and the UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, the international community must join together and formulate countermeasures. For this purpose, partnerships with various bodies are essential, including private companies, NGOs, local governments, and universities. In particular, the role of scientific and technological innovations in solving such issues as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the development of vaccines for infectious diseases, the securing of food materials, and water purification is attracting attention, and interest in the advanced technologies of Japanese companies is growing. Good examples here include the introduction of waterless toilets in Kenya, Indonesia, Viet Nam, and elsewhere by LIXIL Corporation of Japan, and the introduction by the state-run bus company in Bangladesh of the FeliCa noncontact IC card developed by Sony Corporation.



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New Efforts toward Regional Revitalization in Japan

Next I would like to turn our attention to the impact of assistance to developing countries in Japan. At the moment I feel very concerned about the fact that Japan is becoming increasingly inward-looking. But when I see the many young Japanese who have grown immensely after experiencing reality on the ground in developing countries, I also feel reassured that the human resources needed to change Japan are being fostered. More and more, after their return to Japan, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers are becoming active in Japanese society. For example, they are playing an active role in supporting rural areas or disaster-hit reconstruction areas in Japan, or starting up businesses from a new perspective, thereby using their experience in international cooperation for the benefit of society.

Furthermore, there are cases of participation in JICA projects opening up new possibilities, with the value of technologies possessed by Japan's regions being rediscovered as a means

of contributing to the solution of problems in developing countries and small and medium-sized enterprises finding new markets overseas as a result of assistance to developing countries. For example, in the Tokachi region of Hokkaido, as a part of the Food Valley Tokachi regional industrial policy, Obihiro City and the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry are collaborating with JICA. In a project targeting Thailand and Malaysia, they have conveyed the safety and high quality of Japanese food to food product and distribution personnel, and the Japanese side in turn has learned about the importance of halal foods in Muslim countries. As a result, they introduced the world's first halal-certified sweet-bean-jam rice cakes, known as *daifuku*, and sales in Malaysia have steadily grown. Such examples build win-win-win relationships, in which the scope of assistance by JICA is broadened, issues in the developing countries are solved, and regions in Japan are revitalized. JICA will continue to focus efforts in this direction.

National Interest in an Interdependent World and JICA's Contribution

For Japan, which largely depends upon its relationships with the rest of the world, it is a matter of national interest for the world to be peaceful, stable and prosperous. Japan imports goods from around the world, and imports from developing countries actually account for around 50% of the total. The stability and peace of surrounding countries and their ability to engage in free trade are a foundation supporting our lives.

Japan was the first non-Western nation to become a major developed country and has presented a model for modernization. At the same time, by conducting assistance utilizing Japan's principles of development cooperation and experience, Japan has supported the growth of countries in Asia and other regions.

During this period, Japan has experienced various successes and failures and learned many lessons. Since this wealth of information and lessons will be helpful in solving the development issues currently facing the world, I believe that Japan and JICA have a major role to play.

Toward the realization of the SDGs' aim of realizing a world in which no one will be left behind, JICA will continue to serve as a bridge linking Japan and the developing nations and, in collaboration with various actors, it will promote international cooperation.

Reflecting the Terrorist Attack in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Seven consultants engaged in survey work for JICA died, and one was injured, in the terrorist attack that occurred in Dhaka on July 1, 2016. Eight of them were taking part in a preparatory survey related to an infrastructure project to improve the urban transit situation in Dhaka, where traffic is rapidly increasing.

The Japanese caught up in this incident were all enthusiastic about development cooperation and had high levels of expertise. Together with JICA, it was expected that they would contribute to the development of developing countries. In this sense, I feel heartbreaking grief over the fact that such important colleagues lost their lives or were injured. I sincerely pray that those who lost their lives will rest in peace and offer my condolences to their loved ones. I also pray for the earliest possible recovery of the person who was injured.

A week after the Dhaka incident, the security situation in South Sudan deteriorated as well, and JICA personnel were forced to leave the country. Fortunately all of our personnel were safe, but there is no doubt that the evacuation operation was like treading on thin ice, and many issues remained.

In response to these incidents, the Japanese government and JICA set up a council on safety measures for international cooperation projects under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and formulated new safety measures for personnel involved in international cooperation projects and Japanese NGOs.

As specific measures based on the report, JICA is making efforts as swiftly as possible to (1) strengthen the collection, analysis, and sharing of information on threats; (2) ensure the execution of the code of conduct and share it with project personnel and NGO members; (3) strengthen protective measures and training on both the hard and soft sides; (4) be ready to respond when incidents occur; and (5) raise crisis management awareness and strengthen the organizational setup.

Through these safety measures, JICA will make its utmost efforts to ensure that such incidents will never be repeated. We intend to carry on the noble aspirations of the deceased toward development and tenaciously do our best for the peace and development of the world.

Shinichi Kitaoka
President, JICA