Message from the President

“Trust” is the key word in challenging global issues

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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 Rikkyo University, Professor in the Faculty of Law of the University of Tokyo, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations (2004–2006), 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.

Fiscal 2016 Sees Fruition of Many Years of Effort

Our Role in an Unstable World

2015 was a year in which international cooperation reached a peak, as shown, for example, by the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September and the Paris Agreement at the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) in December. In 2016, there were moves in the opposite direction to international cooperation, such as the decision of the British people to leave the European Union and the inauguration of a new administration in the United States, as a result of which the world has become somewhat unstable. While there are quite a few countries tending toward this “our nation first” approach, many people also realize that the stability and prosperity of the global society cannot be maintained in this way. In this situation, I believe that Japan now has an even bigger role to play in maintaining the system of international cooperation that has served as the foundation for the peace and stability that have continued after World War II. Indeed, expectations to JICA can often be heard from the international community.

Two impressive events in fiscal 2016 that symbolize this trend were the holding of the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) in Nairobi, Kenya, and the
presentation of the Ramon Magsaysay Award to the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers.

**African Countries Show Ownership**

The first five meetings of TICAD were held in Japan, but the sixth meeting took place in Africa for the first time. African countries fully took the initiative at the meeting, which ended successfully. I think this success is the fruitful result of JICA’s traditional approach, by which we have forged partnerships with partner countries while respecting their ownership. JICA was involved even more actively than before, cooperating with the Japanese government in the drafting of the Nairobi Declaration, staging various side events, and holding meetings with participating countries and international organizations. During the meeting, JICA hosted or cohosted 26 side events, including an event on universal health coverage (UHC)* that was attended by many heads of governments and international organizations and contributed to compilation of the “UHC in Africa” policy framework. I believe that this effort was possible precisely because JICA has continued to address issues in the field of public health systems for many years, including measures against infectious diseases and mother-child health. Another notable achievement was the launch of the Initiative for Food and Nutrition Security in Africa (IFNA).

Above all, I think the meeting was a success thanks to the initiative taken by the African countries with a sense of ownership. Many African leaders are thinking seriously about what strategies are necessary for the development of their countries, gaining an understanding of specific policies, and at the same time lending an ear to advice from other nations. I myself was able to meet such excellent leaders.

**JOCVs Foster Trust in the Japanese People**

In August 2016 the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers received the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award, which is considered to be Asia’s equivalent of the Nobel Peace Prize. This award is granted to individuals and organizations that have achieved excellent results in social contributions in the Asian region. I am very grateful that we have received recognition. A year earlier the JOCVs had marked the 50th anniversary of the program. Initially many of the countries to which the JOCVs were dispatched were nations that had suffered damage at the hands of Japan during World War II. At a time when postwar Japan faced a harsh international environment, the JOCVs showed respect for the local cultures and customs in the countries concerned, overcame difficulties together with the local people, and shared joy with them. Their contribution to solving issues in the countries to which they were dispatched played a major role in enabling the Japanese people to gain trust in the international community.

JICA will continue striving to ensure the safety of volunteers, increase the number of applicants, and improve quality.

**Utmost Efforts to Ensure Safety**

We are extremely saddened by the fact that seven consultants engaged in survey work for JICA died, and one was injured, in the terrorist attack that occurred in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in July 2016. In addition, in the same month the public security situation in South Sudan deteriorated, and JICA-related personnel were forced to leave that country.

In response to these incidents, the Japanese government and JICA set up the Council on Safety Measures for International Cooperation Projects under the Minister for Foreign Affairs and formulated new safety measures. Based on the council’s final report, JICA is making efforts to strengthen the collection and analysis of information on threats, strengthen the sharing of information, encourage personnel to strictly obey a stipulated scope...
Ichigo Holdings Co., Ltd., based in Miyagi Prefecture, Japan, introduced small mobile water treatment systems in Micronesia with the aim of purifying seawater and supplying safe drinking water.

People on Mindanao are working on the pesticide-free cultivation of vegetables. As well as offering assistance in accordance with the needs of the local people, JICA helped set up the provision of administrative services in the Mindanao region. (Photo by Masataka Otsuka)

of activity during their stay overseas, provide safety information through emergency contact networks, strengthen protective measures and training, establish a manual for response after a crisis has occurred, and enhance our support setup including mental care. As there are no miracle remedies, we will continue our steady and devoted efforts.

Transition to New Medium-term Plan

From 3rd to 4th Medium-term Plan

Fiscal 2016 was the final business year of JICA’s 3rd Medium-term Plan, which covered five years from fiscal 2012. In the 4th Medium-term Plan, which started in April 2017 and covers the period up to March 2022, in addition to the important issues stipulated in Japan’s Development Cooperation Charter of “quality growth and poverty eradication through such growth,” “sharing universal values and realizing a peaceful and secure society,” and “building a sustainable and resilient international community through efforts to address global challenges,” we have identified the four priority areas of “strengthening the human capacity of individuals who will be key players in their countries’ development,” “fortifying partnerships between actors in Japan who are involved in, and contributing to, development cooperation and regional vitalization,” “contributing to international commitments and serving as a leader in the international community,” and “strengthening security measures.”

Quality Infrastructure Investment

I think that during the period of the 3rd Medium-term Plan we managed to achieve a certain level of results in such areas as natural disaster and emergency relief, poverty eradication, sustainable economic growth, global issues, and peacebuilding. Among them, in terms of concrete figures, the best results were seen in quality infrastructure investment. The volume of ODA Loans, which had previously hovered around ¥1 trillion (fiscal year commitment amount), rose to the levels of ¥1.5 trillion and ¥2 trillion during the period of the 3rd Medium-term Plan, and they contributed to the realization of quality growth in developing countries in terms of inclusiveness, resilience, and sustainability as proclaimed in the Development Cooperation Charter. As part of this effort, toward the realization of a “Partnership for Quality Infrastructure,” we have established a dollar-denominated loan system and are increasing co-financing with such international institutions as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

In quality infrastructure investment, the following four points are essential in order of importance: first, playing a significant role in the partner country’s development; second, playing a role in strengthening relations between Japan and the partner country; third, being beneficial for the Japanese economy and private sector; and fourth, not placing an excessive financial burden on JICA. In order to maintain and further enhance the trust that Japan has built up over many years, it is important to contribute to the strengthening of bilateral relations through the partner country’s development.

Peacebuilding by Displaying Japan’s Uniqueness

Regarding peacebuilding, in South Sudan, for example, in addition to conventional support for such infrastructure as roads, bridges, and ports, in 2016 JICA conducted a unique experiment by
This Afghan student, who is studying at graduate school in Japan, came to Japan under JICA’s Project for the Promotion and Enhancement of the Afghan Capacity for Effective Development (PEACE).

In Ghana, utilizing the results of assistance for the strengthening of regional health functions, JICA set about improving health services for pregnant women and newborn babies. (Photo by Takeshi Kuno)

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In November 2016 JICA also launched the Japanese Initiative for the Future of Syrian Refugees (JISR), in which JICA receives refugees from Syria as international students. In such ways, JICA is adopting a uniquely Japanese approach to peacebuilding.

In the light of that event, it is indeed a pity that the security situation in South Sudan deteriorated last year and JICA-related personnel had to leave the country.

There are several stages in peacebuilding. Japan is not necessarily very good at bringing armed conflicts to an end. But after a ceasefire has been reached, the way is opened for Japan to contribute. For example, in Mindanao, the Philippines, the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front signed a comprehensive peace agreement in 2014. JICA has continued to support the peace process there by providing venues for discussions between the related parties and other measures and has supported districts in Mindanao impacted by the conflict, for example through the training of human resources to guide post-peace development and community development. It is hoped that the results of JICA’s efforts will manifest themselves and continue in the medium and long term.

In addition, regarding the refugee problem, as evacuation periods become longer, JICA is implementing such assistance as support for countries that accept refugees and encouraging refugees themselves to learn job skills so that they can work. In November 2016 JICA also launched the Japanese Initiative for the Future of Syrian Refugees (JISR), in which JICA receives refugees from Syria as international students. In such ways, JICA is adopting a uniquely Japanese approach to peacebuilding.

Universal Health Coverage (UHC)
—Comprehensive efforts to promote the health of everyone

One of the efforts in the 4th Medium-term Plan that we want to especially focus on is UHC. In May 2017 JICA signed a memorandum of understanding with the Asian Development Bank aimed at strengthening collaboration in the promotion of health security and UHC in the Asia-Pacific region.

The use of the Maternal and Child Health Handbook from pregnancy and childbirth to infancy is an effective means of promoting health. After that, it is necessary to ingrain healthy habits, such as washing your hands when you return home from outdoors. Also, people need to consume nutritious food, so good agriculture must be established for this purpose. And they should get adequate exercise. Actually, all of these activities are JICA’s forte. Hopefully we can combine those different types of activities for health promotion and development in developing countries.

Promoting Development Studies in Japan

Through the acceptance of foreign students, JICA is also actively engaged in the fostering of human resources capable of guiding the development of developing countries.

At the end of the Edo period (1603–1868), compared with Western levels, Japan was a developing country. During and after the Meiji period (1868–1912), while maintaining its traditions, Japan achieved development and built a free, equal, affluent, and
Leading the World with Trust

What Is the Uniqueness of Japan and JICA?

In July 2017 JICA announced a new vision of “Leading the World with Trust.” Nine years had passed since the declaration of our previous vision, “Inclusive and Dynamic Development.” During that period, the government approved a new Development Cooperation Charter in 2015, and the world situation became more volatile, so we decided that it was time for a change. Thinking about a new vision, I once again looked at the Development Cooperation Charter, and I realized that JICA should place the spotlight on human security and quality growth. These concepts were therefore stipulated as our mission. Quality growth means growth aiming for “inclusiveness,” by which nobody gets left behind; “sustainability,” which aims for sustainable economic, social, and environmental development taking account of the limits of the Earth; and “resilience” to cope with natural disasters, conflicts, and economic crises.

The key word of the vision is “trust.” Compared with other donor countries, Japan’s ODA is certainly not very large in terms of per-capita value. Relatively speaking, however, it is highly regarded in the international community. The reason, I think, lies in Japan’s approach. Japan always views the recipient country as an equal partner, without adopting a condescending or obstructive attitude, and, standing in the other side’s shoes, respects the partner’s ownership. Even in areas in which Japan has abundant experience, such as recovery from disaster, Japan sincerely states, “Japan has encountered various disasters, and we have not always been successful in recovery. We have made many mistakes. But we want to share those mistakes and lessons with you.” I think it is this approach that elicits trust. When we thought about what comprises Japan’s and JICA’s uniqueness, we realized that these relations of trust are most important, so “trust” became the key word of our vision.

Aspiring for a free, peaceful, and prosperous world where people can hope for a better future and explore their diverse potential, JICA wants to joint hands with partners and lead the world with trust.

Of course, we will also engage even more actively than before in the development of engineers and other industrial human resources. Also, in Viet Nam we are helping with the retraining of persons in high positions, including potential government leaders. In this way, JICA’s human resource development program is diverse, and we will make full and strategic use of it.

SDGs as an Opportunity for Wide Participation of Actors

Although the SDGs are international objectives, they also include many of the issues that Japan and JICA have been tackling so far, such as the concept of human security and the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction. By sharing the SDGs, I would like to see various actors in Japan participate more actively in JICA’s projects. Recently the SDGs have been taken up a lot by the media, so in this sense, now we have a good chance to encourage such participation.

long-living nation. As a country where traditions and modernity coexist, I think Japan is a good model for developing countries. In ODA as well, with Japan’s support, countries in Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia have achieved significant development. In this sense, Japan’s development assistance can probably be described as one of the best models. With those backgrounds, I believe that Japan could well serve as an ideal place for development studies. I would like to lump the experience and research works by Japan and JICA together as study material so that Japan becomes a center of development studies in the world. We could then invite young government officials and others from developing countries to study Japanese-style development studies and, after their return, utilize what they have learned for the development of their own countries. In cooperation with universities with which we have a track record of achievements so far, we are in the process of preparing the JICA-University Alliance for Development Studies for this purpose.

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