

# Working with Asia for a More Peaceful World

In Prime Minister Taro Aso's policy speech delivered in January 2009, he identified three critical areas he believed Japan should address, one of them being international contributions. He announced that Japan's energies would be directed toward building world peace and stability.

The prime minister also expressed his determination to confront various issues affecting the international community head-on. Among the specific challenges he named were using official development assistance to promote the stability and growth of developing countries in Africa and elsewhere, sustaining the fight against terror, working to resolve global-scale issues like poverty and environmental destruction, and conducting international peace cooperation efforts, such as replenishment support operations in the Indian Ocean.

Japan has consistently upheld and promoted international cooperation as a key policy goal, and in the face of the current "once-in-a-century" global economic crisis, the prime minister emphasized that Japan intends to proactively carry out the duties and responsibilities befitting its international standing.

The cover story of this month's *Highlighting Japan* presents an overview of the ways in which Japan has expanded its cooperation with other Asian countries in response to changes in the global situation, as well as an outlook for the country's future efforts.

## Japan's Evolving ODA

Japan joined the ranks of donor countries when it became a member of the Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific in 1954, and it has been actively helping developing countries achieve economic growth by drawing on its own development experience. As Japan's economy continued to grow, the government steadily expanded its volume of aid. In fact, from 1991 to 2000 Japan was the world's top donor, and it remains a major donor today.

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This article was compiled by *Japan Echo*.

Over the years, nearly half of Japan's ODA has been directed to other Asian countries, with which Japan has close political, economic, and cultural ties. Japan's ODA has been used for such endeavors as economic infrastructure improvements, human resources development, and capacity building. Such assistance can be said to have set the stage for the remarkable growth of the East Asian region.

Given such growth, some among these East Asian countries have outgrown their developing country status. As a result, a greater share of Japan's development assistance now goes to Africa. Positioning Asia as the world's growth center in the twenty-first century, Prime Minister Aso has announced a plan to work with Asia to double the scale of the region's economy by 2020.

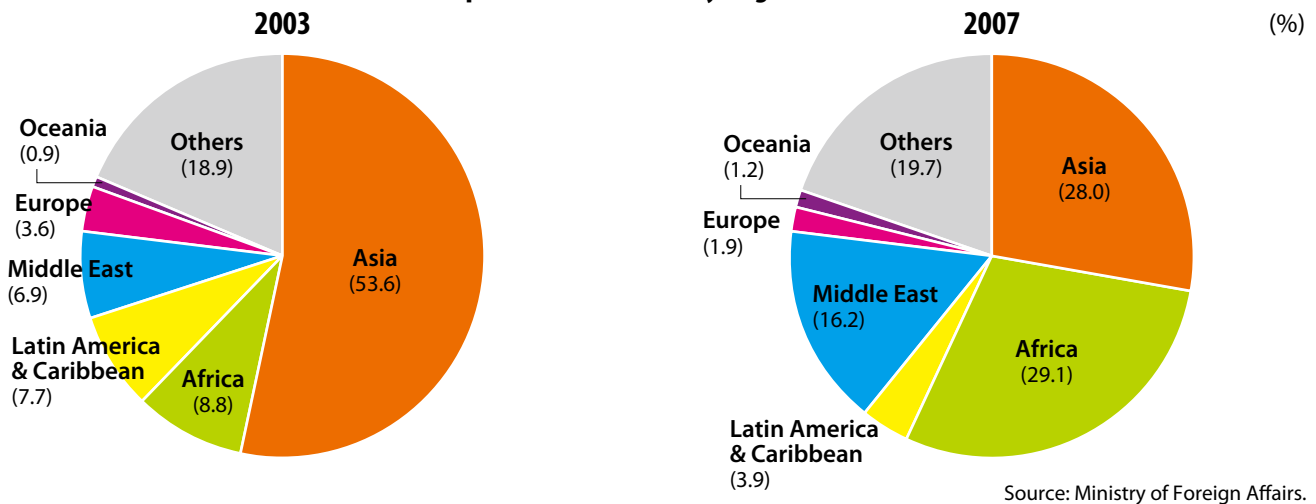
Specifically, great emphasis is being placed on assistance aimed at creating an economic community with the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations by 2015. Toward this goal, assistance is being prioritized under the Japan-Mekong Region Partnership Program to the lesser developed countries of the Mekong region to rectify the intraregional disparities in levels of economic development.

In South and Central Asia, assistance for social and economic infrastructure improvement is being focused on the lesser developed countries of the region to rectify the growing income gaps there.

## Emphasis on Self-Help Efforts

Based on past experience, Japan believes that poverty reduction is a critical part of ODA implementation, and so it supports developing countries' pursuit of sustainable economic growth through self-help efforts and economic activity in the private sector. Accordingly, Japan's ODA projects are implemented to enable recipient countries to keep projects going on their own even after the termination of assistance. They are designed to draw out the strengths of people in recipient countries, so the emphasis is on human resources development, development of legal systems, and improvements in the economic and social infrastructure.

## Japan's Bilateral ODA by Region



Specifically, Japan's ODA seeks to encourage interaction between urban and rural areas, ensure public safety following natural disasters, develop roads, harbors, airports and other transportation infrastructure to encourage trade and investment, improve the communication infrastructure, and enhance access to education, healthcare, safe drinking water, and hygienic living conditions.

Nation-building starts with people, so in the area of higher education, Japan's ODA creates cross-border networks within the ASEAN region to help to improve educational and research capacities. In the area of vocational training, Japan dispatches information technology experts to various countries to provide training in local communities.

Japan's technology is built on such notions as insistence of high quality standards, the importance of keeping promises, and constant efforts toward self-improvement, so transferring Japan's technology can also result in imparting these values to developing countries.

### A "Peace-Fostering Nation"

In addition to assistance in the economic arena, Japan has been stepping up its cooperation to promote peace. In June 1992 the International Peace Cooperation Law (PKO Law) was enacted, opening the door to Japan's participation in UN peacekeeping operations. Japan has been involved in 10 such missions (23 when humanitarian and election-monitoring activities conducted under the PKO Law are included), starting in September 1992 with the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia, providing personnel and logistical support. It is currently engaged in UN PKO missions in the Golan Heights, Nepal, and Sudan.

To restore and maintain global peace and stability, there have recently been cases of multinational forces being organized on the basis of UN Security Council resolutions but not coming under UN command. Ja-

pan is actively contributing to these peace-building initiatives as well. In Iraq, Ground Self-Defense Force personnel were dispatched for humanitarian and reconstruction assistance, supplying drinking water, providing medical care, and helping repair roads in the southern city of Samawah. Members of the Air Self-Defense Force, meanwhile, provided transport assistance for the coalition forces. These efforts have helped restore people's livelihoods and, together with the impact of Japan's ODA, have led to growth in the country's economic activity.

### The Fight against Terrorism

In the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, various countries have been advancing Operation Enduring Freedom to fight Al Qaeda and other groups, and maritime interdiction operations are being carried out in the Indian Ocean.

Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force has been providing replenishment support to coalition ships participating in Operation Enduring Freedom under the provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law from 2001 to 2007 and under the Replenishment Support Special Measures Law since 2008. The MSDF's refueling activities are crucial to the maritime interdiction operations being carried out by the coalition forces and have greatly contributed to their operational efficiency, as they enable coalition ships to monitor the Indian Ocean on a round-the-clock basis.

Japan's replenishment support activities in the Indian Ocean have been a very effective contribution to the fight against terrorism. Japan's aid policy is no longer restricted to development cooperation but has expanded to the field of peace-building. As Prime Minister Aso has indicated, Japan will proactively address such global challenges as climate change, and it will meet the expectations of the international community as a "peace-fostering nation." 