



Ship for World Youth, 2011

ALL PHOTOS MASATOSHI SAKAMOTO

It is five minutes past four in the afternoon of January 21. A steam whistle sounds three times, and the *Fuji Maru*, carrying the 265 participants in the Ship for World Youth Program, leisurely pulls away from the Osanbashi terminal in Yokohama. On the deck, young people wearing the national costumes of different countries are tossing colorful bands in the direction of the pier, singing, dancing and raising a big stir.

"Bye-bye, have a safe journey!" Many friends and family members are waving from the shore as they see off the ship at the start of its forty-one-day journey.

The Ship for World Youth program, which is sponsored by the Cabinet Office, promotes mutual understanding and friendship among young people from Japan and other countries, and aims to nurture people with the ability to show leadership in international society. This year marks the twenty-third year of the program with the participation of young people from Japan and twelve other countries in South and Central America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Pacific states including Mexico, Chile, Oman, Tanzania, and the Federated States of Micronesia. The ship is heading to the south Pacific and will return to Japan on March 2 after visiting Fiji and



Ship for World Youth Program participants wave goodbye as the *Fuji Maru* pulls away from Yokohama, January 21, 2011.

Brisbane in Australia. On board the ship, the participants will engage in a program of discussions divided into seven different themes including cross-cultural understanding, education, and sustainable global community, give national presentations about life in their own countries, or enjoy sports and other activities. The intention is also to visit universities and engage in exchange with local youths in the countries where the ship visits.

So far, 5,880 people have participated in the Ship for World Youth program, forging talented people who are active in every field. Helen Clark, former prime minister of New Zealand and presently ad-



Participants pose for a photograph before the *Fuji Maru* departs Yokohama.

ministrator of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), is just one of them.

Alumni associations consisting of past participants have been organized in most countries, helping to select participants and carrying out exchanges with the alumni associations in other countries.

“This program is fantastic for young people all around the world,” comments Luciana Yonekawa, who works for the Ministry of Education in Brazil and is presently the national leader for Brazil on the Ship for World Youth. “We have the opportunity to mingle with different cultures together, make many friends, and gain knowledge about other countries.”



An “icebreaking” event held for Ship for World Youth Program participants at the National Olympics Memorial Center in Tokyo, January 17.