



Issue 3

# Bulletin for People- to-People Exchanges

## China and Japan

Connecting People,  
Understanding the World







China and Japan are of geographical proximity and cultural affinity.<sup>1</sup> In history, Japan sent waves of envoys to study during the Tang Dynasty period and promoted friendly exchanges between the two countries. On the other hand, Jianzhen, an eminent Chinese monk in the Tang Dynasty, crossed the ocean to Japan to spread Buddhism, which had a far-reaching impact on the religious development in Japan. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the cultural exchanges between China and Japan have gone through three historical stages: initial foundation, all-around development, and in-depth understanding.<sup>2</sup> After entering the 21st century, although the cultural exchanges between China and Japan fluctuated from time to time, a bettering momentum showed in 2017. In 2019, the China-Japan high-level consultation on cultural and people-to-people exchange was officially launched. With the year 2022 marking the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan, both sides have made joint efforts to boost the flourishing bilateral exchanges in culture, education, youth, economy, and tourism are flourishing.

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<sup>1</sup> 新华网：《王毅同日本外相林芳正通电话》，2021年11月18日，[http://www.news.cn/2021-11/18/c\\_1128077923.htm](http://www.news.cn/2021-11/18/c_1128077923.htm)，2022-09-16。

<sup>2</sup> 尹允镇、李文娇：《试论中日人文交流的演变、特征及发展趋势》，《东北亚论坛》2020年第3期，第90页。

# 01 Historical Evolution of the Mechanism for People-to-people Exchanges between China and Japan

As the latest achievement of the people-to-people exchanges between China and other countries, the mechanism is of bilateral high-level consultation on cultural and people-to-people exchange, which was officially launched in November 2019. It not only enriched the regular institutional platforms for people-to-people exchanges between China and other countries but also consolidated public support for fostering a Sino-Japanese relationship in the new era to lead bilateral relations to a brighter future.

On May 23, 2015, President Xi Jinping delivered an important speech at the Conference on Sino-Japanese Friendly Exchanges Conference, charting the path for the new development of the non-governmental exchanges between China and Japan in the new era. He pointed out that "Solid non-governmental support underlies the Sino-Japanese friendly ties, of which the future lies in the hands of our two countries. The more difficulties there are, the more active efforts of people from all walks of life and the more frequent non-governmental exchanges of the two countries are needed to improve the bilateral relations."<sup>1</sup>

China and Japan organized a series of high-level activities in 2018, a major historical juncture marking the 40th anniversary of the *Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship*. Premier Li Keqiang visited Japan on May 8, 2018, while then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe paid a return visit to China on October 25 of the same year, for resuming the bilateral high-level political visits after an interruption of nearly eight years.

On May 1, 2019, when China was about to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its founding, Japan's new Emperor Naruhito formally ascended to the throne, starting the Reiwa era. The people-to-people exchanges between the two countries entered a new era.

In June 2019, President Xi Jinping attended the 14th Summit of the Group of Twenty (G20) in Osaka, Japan, and reached ten consensuses with then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The two leaders

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<sup>1</sup> 新华网：《习近平在中日友好交流大会上的讲话（全文）》，2015年5月23日，[http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-05/23/c\\_1115384379.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-05/23/c_1115384379.htm), 2022-08-16。

stressed that China and Japan, as major contributors to the development of Asian civilization, should continuously strengthen people-to-people exchanges and cooperation based on the profound bilateral linkage in history and culture. It was also decided to launch the high-level consultation mechanism on cultural and people-to-people exchange within the year.<sup>1</sup> The summit laid a solid foundation for establishing the mechanism.

From November 22 to 26, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi co-chaired with then Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi the first meeting of high-level consultation mechanism on cultural and people-to-people exchange between China and Japan. Through exchanged views on bilateral collaborations related to culture, education, sports, tourism, media, film and TV, women and youth, both sides also made joint plans for exchange programs in 2020, with a view to a new pattern of cultural exchange featuring diversification and interaction.<sup>2</sup> The first meeting marks the official establishment of the mechanism.

On November 25, 2019, President Xi Jinping and then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe sent a congratulatory letter to the first meeting respectively. President Xi Jinping stressed, as the current Sino-Japanese relations keep improving, the two countries are expected to promote bilateral cultural exchanges with the full use of the mechanism and bring our people closer and provide humanistic support for the Sino-Japanese relationship consistent with the needs of the new era.<sup>3</sup>

Eight consensuses were reached during the first meeting in 2019, that is, to designate the year 2020 as the "China-Japan Cultural and Sports Exchange Promotion Year"; resume and expand the two-way study tours for youth of the two countries; expand the travel between the two countries in a balanced manner to exceed 15 million as soon as possible, and organize the China-Japan Tourism Forum; promote cooperation in cultural industries concerning film and TV, music, animation, publishing, and so on, and exchange and mutual visits of high-level art troupes; support each other in hosting Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games and Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games and promote exchanges and cooperation in sports through the bond of Olympics; support mutual visits and exchanges and cooperation among the press; share experiences in advancing women's cause and promote the cooperation participated by both men and women in development; and hold the second meeting of the China-Japan high-level consultation mechanism on cultural and people-to-people exchange in China at an appropriate time in 2021.<sup>4</sup>

On November 2020, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi met the press with then Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi in Tokyo. The two sides reached important consensuses and many concrete results. The two sides agreed to cooperate and support each other in hosting the

<sup>1</sup> 环球网：《习近平会见安倍晋三，双方达成十点共识》，2019年6月27日，<https://m.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnlbCw>，2022-08-16。

<sup>2</sup> 中国政府网：《王毅同日本外相茂木敏充共同主持中日高级别人文交流磋商机制首次会议》，2019年1月25日，[http://www.gov.cn/guowuyuan/2019-11/25/content\\_5455481.htm](http://www.gov.cn/guowuyuan/2019-11/25/content_5455481.htm)，2022-08-16。

<sup>3</sup> 人民网：《习近平向中日高级别人文交流磋商机制首次会议致贺信》，2019年11月25日，<http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2019/1125/c1024-31473371.html>，2022-08-16。

<sup>4</sup> 中国政府网：《王毅同日本外相茂木敏充共同主持中日高级别人文交流磋商机制首次会议》，2019年11月25日，[http://www.gov.cn/guowuyuan/2019-11/25/content\\_5455481.htm](http://www.gov.cn/guowuyuan/2019-11/25/content_5455481.htm)，2022-08-16。

Tokyo Olympic Games and the Beijing Olympic Winter Games and make these two major sports events a success. Meanwhile, the two sides agreed to hold a meeting of the high-level consultation mechanism on people-to-people exchange at an appropriate time, fully resume bilateral personnel exchanges after the end of the pandemic, expand regional exchanges and cooperation, enhance mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples, and improve the public opinion environment for bilateral relations.<sup>1</sup>

The year 2022 marks the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan, ushering in new opportunities for the improvement and development of bilateral relations through people-to-people exchanges. In his speech on “Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations and reflecting on the theme of the era of peace and development”, the Chinese Ambassador to Japan Kong Xuanyou pointed out that the two sides should strive to overcome the impact of the pandemic, take positive actions to expand the people-to-people exchanges and communications at the subnational level, maintain the popularity and frequency of exchanges, enhance the mutual understanding of the two peoples, and change the trend of declining public support. The future of Sino-Japanese relations is in the hands of the younger generation. Emphasizing the exchanges of the youth, both sides should attract more young people to pay attention to the development of the bilateral relations and engage in the cause of Sino-Japanese friendship, striving for leading the friendship between the two peoples to a new height in the new era.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 新华网：《王毅：中日达成五点重要共识和六项具体成果》，2020年11月24日，[http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2020-11/25/c\\_1126781909.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2020-11/25/c_1126781909.htm)，2022-09-21。

<sup>2</sup> 外交部：《日本大使孔铉佑在日中协会发表“纪念邦交正常化50周年、思考和平与发展时代主题”演讲》，2022年6月1日，[https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/zwbdt\\_673032/gzhd\\_673042/202206/t20220601\\_10697514.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/zwbdt_673032/gzhd_673042/202206/t20220601_10697514.shtml)，2022-08-16。

## 02 Relevant Agencies for People-to-people Exchanges between China and Japan

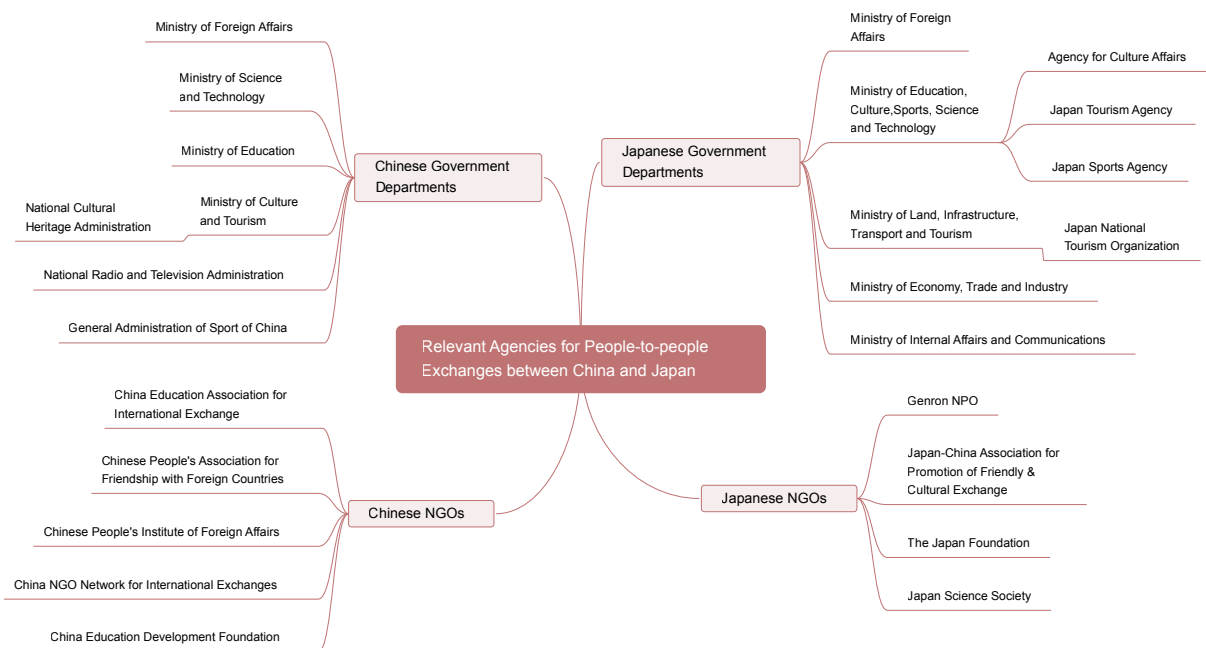


Figure 1 Relevant Agencies for People-to-people Exchanges between China and Japan

The people-to-people exchanges between China and Japan are jointly promoted by governmental and non-governmental agencies. Major Chinese governmental departments include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, National Radio and Television Administration, General Administration of Sport of China, and so on. Major Japanese governmental departments include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, and so on. At the non-governmental level, many NGOs have actively participated in the people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. Major organizations in China include the China Education Association for International Exchange, the Chinese People's Friendship Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, the China Education Development Foundation, the China NGO Network for International Exchanges, and so on. Major organizations in Japan include the Genron NPO, Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association, the Japan Science Society, the Japan Foundation, and so on.



## 03 Top-Level Design for People-to-People Exchanges between China and Japan

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan proposed a diplomatic strategy of “Public Diplomacy” in the Diplomatic Bluebook 2007.<sup>❶</sup> The public diplomacy of Japan covers public relations abroad, cultural exchange, people-to-people exchange, cooperation with international organizations, cultural grant assistance, exchange programs for promoting understanding of Japan, and other public diplomacy-related affairs. Public relations abroad refers to active export of information on Japanese foreign policy as well as general information on Japan including its politics, economy, society, and culture to other countries. Cultural exchange means introducing traditional and mainstream Japanese culture to other countries and supporting exchanges of civil society organizations together with Japan Foundation. People-to-people exchange mainly covers exchanges between government officials, scholars, youths, international students, and sports. Cooperation with international organizations covers the support for international exchange activities organized by UNESCO and United Nations University. Cultural grant assistance is meant to provide equipment and facilities for developing countries to revitalize their culture and higher education. Exchange programs for promoting understanding of Japan mainly refer to the personnel dispatch, recruitment, and online exchange activities promoted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.<sup>❷</sup>

According to Immigration Services Agency of Japan, the number of Chinese students studying in Japan reached 96,594 in 2021, accounting for 46.5% of the total number of international students, far surpassing that of international students from other countries.<sup>❸</sup> As unofficial ambassadors to promote people-to-people friendship, international students play an important role in enhancing internal and external contacts between China and other countries. Undoubtedly, the public diplomacy policy of Japan has effectively promoted the people-to-people exchanges between China and Japan.

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❶ 外務省：『Magnetism of Japan ～日本のソフトパワーを追って～』（外務省：《Magnetism of Japan ～追求日本软实力～》），2007年11月28日，[https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/annai/listen/interview2/intv\\_01.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/annai/listen/interview2/intv_01.html)，2022-08-16。

❷ 外務省：『広報文化外交』（外務省：《公共外交》），<https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/culture/index.html>，2022-08-16。

❸ 参见日本出入国在留管理庁：<https://www.moj.go.jp/isa/policies/statistics/index.html>，2022-09-01。



On December 6, 2019, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi co-chaired the seventh round of China-Japan high-level political dialogue along with former Secretary General of Japan's National Security Secretariat Shigeru Kitamura. Yang Jiechi said that the two sides should examine and handle bilateral relations with a strategic vision, adhere to the four political documents between China and Japan, uphold the principle of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs, accelerate the implementation of important consensuses between the leaders, and actively promote the sound and stable development of bilateral relations. Yang Jiechi pointed out that, great changes in the world, new opportunities for Asia and new era of China and Japan provide favourable conditions for the long-term development of bilateral relations. The two sides should continuously consolidate political mutual trust, foster a strong sense of partnership, adhere to the concept of long-term development and overall situation, respect each other's core interests and major concerns, deepen exchanges and cooperation in all fields, and properly manage, control and handle conflicts and divergences. The two sides agreed that the current China-Japan relations have maintained a momentum of improvement and development. The two sides will work together to make thoughtful planning and preparations, and create a harmonious atmosphere, in a bid to ensure the success of the significant political diplomatic agendas between the two countries next year.<sup>1</sup>

On February 28, 2020, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi co-chaired the eighth round of China-Japan high-level political dialogue along with former Secretary General of Japan's National Security Secretariat Shigeru Kitamura. The dialogue was held at a special time when China and Japan were fighting against the COVID-19 outbreak. Both sides exchanged views on joining hands to combat the epidemic. Yang Jiechi pointed out, in the face of the epidemic, China and Japan have assisted each other in overcoming difficulties together. It is believed that after the test of the epidemic, the lasting friendship between China and Japan will increasingly become the common aspiration and action of the two peoples. Shigeru Kitamura spoke highly of China taking firm and robust measures to combat the epidemic and achieving remarkable results, saying that the Chinese side's experience in fighting the epidemic has served as a positive example for Japan. The Japanese side is ready to strengthen information sharing, experience sharing and technical cooperation with the Chinese side in the field of public health security to jointly safeguard international public health security.<sup>2</sup>

On November 24, 2020, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi held talks with then Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi in Tokyo. Wang Yi said, thanks to joint efforts, China-Japan relations have got back on track and shown positive momentum toward improved and stronger ties. This is worth cherishing and upholding by the two sides. The leaders of the two states have achieved the important consensuses of "regarding each other as partners rather than threats" and "turning competition into coordination". The Chinese side stands ready to work with the Japanese

<sup>1</sup> 人民网：《中日第七次高级别政治对话在北京举行》，2019年12月6日，<http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2019/1206/c1002-31494603.html>，2022-08-16。

<sup>2</sup> 人民网：《中日第八次高级别政治对话在东京举行》，2020年2月29日，<http://japan.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0229/c35421-31610512.html>，2022-08-16。

side on the basis of the above consensuses, seek cooperation of higher quality in the post-pandemic era, and create a win-win situation for China and Japan. Both sides should overcome the impact of COVID-19, gradually restart dialogues and exchanges between all departments, and continue to strengthen cooperation in fighting COVID-19. They should expand win-win cooperation in trade and investment, service trade, energy conservation and environmental protection, e-commerce, medical treatment and healthcare, disaster prevention and reduction, digital economy, green development, sub-national exchanges, and climate change. Toshimitsu Motegi said that Wang Yi's visit to Japan is the first face-to-face contact between foreign ministers of the two countries after the outbreak of the virus, which is of great significance for resuming bilateral exchanges at the top level. Japan stands ready to work with China to implement the consensuses reached by the leaders of the two countries, maintain close high-level communication, and resume negotiations and security dialogues of parliaments, economy and trade, and foreign affairs authorities. The two sides should expand cooperation in such fields as tourism, health care, energy conservation and environmental protection, trade of agricultural products, and climate change, and promote youth, cultural and sports exchanges. Japan thanks China for its support in Japan's fight against the virus, and it stands ready to work with China to strengthen cooperation in fighting COVID-19. Both sides agree that they support each other in hosting the Tokyo Olympic Games and the Beijing Winter Olympic Games. While strictly putting virus control measures in place, they will launch a "fast track" for the necessary flow of personnel between the two countries within the month to facilitate business activities. The two sides will establish a climate change policy consultation mechanism, and an inter-departmental consultation mechanism on cooperation in food, agricultural products and aquatic products, and start preparations for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the normalization of China-Japan diplomatic ties in 2022.<sup>1</sup>

On October 26, 2021, the closing ceremony for the 17th Beijing-Tokyo Forum, one of the most important platforms for non-governmental exchanges between China and Japan, was held simultaneously at venues in both Beijing and Tokyo. Gao Anming, Vice President and Editor in Chief of China International Publishing Group, announced the Beijing Consensus. According to the Beijing Consensus, it is of vital significance to maintain the sound and steady development of China-Japan relations. Facing the dramatic changes in the world, including Asia, the two peoples pay special attention to the development trend of China-Japan relations. In particular, the two countries should conduct extensive and candid dialogue at both the government and people-to-people levels to promote mutual understanding and discuss the future of bilateral relations. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face exchanges between the Chinese and Japanese people have decreased, and many dialogue mechanisms are at a standstill. Against this backdrop, it becomes more important to maintain and strengthen people-to-people exchanges. It is believed that people-to-people exchanges are complementary to diplomacy and play a special role in building a bilateral relationship in keeping with the demand of a new era.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 中国新闻网：《王毅同日本外相茂木敏充举行会谈》，2020年11月24日，<https://www.chinanews.com.cn/gn/2020/11-24/9346600.shtml>，2022-09-01。

<sup>2</sup> 中国网：《中国发布 | 第十七届“北京—东京论坛”发表共识 中日应携手解决全球性问题》，2021年10月26日，[http://news.china.com.cn/2021-10/26/content\\_77834426.html](http://news.china.com.cn/2021-10/26/content_77834426.html)，2022-08-16。

On November 18, 2021, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi had a phone conversation with Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi. Wang Yi pointed out that the two sides should fully leverage the unique advantages of geographical proximity and cultural affinity, and take the opportunity of Beijing Winter Olympic Games and the “China-Japan Cultural and Sports Exchange Promotion Year” in 2021 and 2022 to create a positive public opinion and social atmosphere. Yoshimasa Hayashi said that Japan is willing to work with China to take the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries next year as an opportunity to strengthen dialogue and exchanges, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation, enhance people-to-people exchanges, properly manage differences, shoulder the responsibilities in confronting global challenges, implement the consensus such as “no threats to each other” and advance the building of stable and constructive Japan-China relations.<sup>1</sup>

On August 17, 2022, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi co-chaired the ninth round of China-Japan high-level political dialogue in Tianjin with Secretary-General of Japan’s National Security Secretariat Akiba Takeo. Yang Jiechi said that the history of more than 2,000 years of exchanges between China and Japan and the development of relations over the past 50 years since the normalization of diplomatic ties have shown that peaceful coexistence and friendly cooperation are the only right choice for bilateral relations. It is vital that the two sides follow the important common consensus reached between leaders of the two countries as the political guidance and act upon them as guidelines, uphold a strong sense of responsibility and mission, take serious lessons from history, stay well-focused and clear-minded, eliminate internal and external disturbances, and work together to build a China-Japan relationship that answers the needs of the new era.<sup>2</sup>

On September 12, 2022, Chinese Embassy in Japan and Japan Business Federation co-hosted a symposium marking the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan under the theme “Staying True to the Original Aspiration and Embracing the Future”. State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi addressed the symposium via video link respectively. The Chinese Ambassador to Japan Kong Xuanyou and former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda delivered keynote speeches. It is stressed that the two sides should activate the friendship between the two peoples through extensive people-to-people exchanges and communication at the sub-national level, look into the future and enhance the exchanges between the youths, and lay a foundation for the orderly resumption of mobility of the people after the end of the pandemic. The two sides should follow the path of justice, practice true multilateralism and open regionalism, and make correct choices between solidarity and division as well as between cooperation and confrontation, to inject more stability and positive energy into the turbulent and changing world.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 人民网：《王毅同日本外相林芳正通电话》，2021年11月19日，<http://cjkeizai.j.people.com.cn/n1/2021/1119/c368504-32287148.html>，2022-08-16。

<sup>2</sup> 人民网：《中日第九次高级别政治对话在天津举行》，2022年8月18日，<http://cjkeizai.j.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0818/c368504-32505895.html>，2022-09-01。

<sup>3</sup> 中华人民共和国驻日本国大使馆：《驻日本使馆举办“不忘初心、开创未来”纪念中日邦交正常化50周年研讨会》，2022年9月12日，[http://jp.china-embassy.gov.cn/sgkxnew/202209/t20220912\\_10765287.htm](http://jp.china-embassy.gov.cn/sgkxnew/202209/t20220912_10765287.htm)，2022-09-14。

On November 17, 2022, President Xi Jinping met with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Bangkok, Thailand. The teams of the two sides conducted consultations and reached a five-point common understanding on stabilizing and developing bilateral relations: The importance of China-Japan relations has not and will not change. Jointly abide by the principles of the four China-Japan political documents, and act on the political consensus that the two countries should “be partners, not threats”. Step up high-level exchanges, dialogue and communication, keep enhancing political mutual trust, and work together to build a stable and constructive China-Japan relationship fit for the new era. Work for an early new round of China-Japan High-level Economic Dialogue. Actively carry out exchanges and communication between governments, political parties, legislatures, and localities, as well as among the young people.<sup>1</sup>

On October 23, 2023, Wang Yi, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs, attended a reception marking the 45th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between China and Japan. During the reception, Wang said that China and Japan are important neighbors with a deep historical bond and close cultural ties. Good-neighborly friendship is the only right choice for both sides. The two sides should adhere to good-neighborly friendship and improve public support for bilateral relations, make full use of the unique advantages of their geographical proximity and cultural affinity, continue to carry out friendly exchanges in various fields and through multiple channels, help the two peoples, especially the younger generations, develop an objective and friendly understanding of each other, and write a new chapter of China-Japan friendship in the new era.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 新华网：《中日双方就稳定和发展双边关系达成五点共识》，2022年11月18日，[http://www.news.cn/world/2022-11/18/c\\_1129137848.htm](http://www.news.cn/world/2022-11/18/c_1129137848.htm)，2022-11-18。

<sup>2</sup> 外交部：《王毅出席纪念中日和平友好条约缔结45周年招待会》，2023年10月24日，[https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/zwbdt\\_673032/gzhd\\_673042/202206/t20220601\\_10697514.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/zwbdt_673032/gzhd_673042/202206/t20220601_10697514.shtml)，2023-10-24。

# 04 People-to-people Exchanges between China and Japan

Under the mechanism for people-to-people exchanges between China and Japan, the two countries have achieved productive results in the cooperation in culture, education, sports, tourism, health, local exchanges, youth affairs, trade, and other fields.

## (1) Culture

On December 4, 2020, the China-Japan Forum for Hehe Civilization was held via video link between Beijing and Tokyo. Friends from the two sides met online for in-depth discussions on cultural exchanges and mutual learning between the two civilizations. They explored the ways to build a China-Japan relationship that answers the needs of the new era and expressed the wish for expanding consensus and promoting harmony and prosperity in Asia and the world through friendly exchanges.<sup>1</sup>

On November 23, 2021, the award ceremony for the “Panda Cup” Japan Youth Essay Contest was held online. The “Panda Cup” Japan Youth Essay Contest was co-sponsored by the Chinese Embassy in Japan, CICG Center for Asia and Pacific, and the Japan Science Society. Up to 2021, it had been successfully held eight times. The Chinese Ambassador to Japan Kong Xuanyou pointed out that nearly 3,500 Japanese youths had shared their stories and understanding of China on the platform over the past eight years. It not only opened a window for the Japanese people to enhance their understanding of China but also injected fresh vitality into the efforts to inherit and carry forward the friendship between the two countries.<sup>2</sup>

From April 9 to 10, 2022, the OneAsia Festival 2022 and the China-Japan Cultural Exchange Festival was held in Toshima-ku, Tokyo, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan and promote cultural exchanges. During the

<sup>1</sup> 人民网：《为构建人类命运共同体提供东方智慧 中日和合文明论坛召开》，2020年12月7日，<http://japan.people.com.cn/n1/2020/1207/c35421-31957400.html>，2022-08-16。

<sup>2</sup> 人民网：《2021“熊猫杯”日本青年征文大赛举行线上颁奖仪式》，2021年11月24日，<http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2021/1124/c1002-32291148.html>，2022-08-16。

event, artists from the two countries staged wonderful performances. With singing and dancing as the media, they demonstrated the colorful folk culture of the two countries and their profound friendship.<sup>1</sup>

## (2) Education

The exchange in education is a pillar of the people-to-people exchanges between China and Japan. As a high-level event for exchanges between China and Japan in education, China-Japan Conference on Education Exchange & Cooperation has become one of the major platforms for omni-directional and wide-ranging exchanges of the education circle of the two countries after several years of development. It serves as a bridge for exchanges and dialogue between schools, scholars, and youths of the two countries, playing an important role in deepening the people-to-people exchanges, strengthening mutual understanding and friendship of the people, and promoting China-Japan friendship.

On November 27, 2019, the 6th China-Japan Conference on Education Exchange & Cooperation was held in Osaka. Zhao Lingshan, then vice president of the China Education Association for International Exchange, said that the exchanges between China and Japan in education have continued to deepen since the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan in 1972. With expanding fields of cooperation at higher levels, it has become an indispensable part of China-Japan relations and played an active role in spreading knowledge, training talents, enhancing mutual understanding, and promoting the common development of the two countries. Zhao Lingshan offered two suggestions on deepening the non-governmental exchanges and cooperation in education between the two countries. Firstly, we should achieve concrete results in the cooperation of institutes of higher learning. Secondly, we should promote effective exchanges between young students of the two sides. Former Consul General of China in Osaka Li Tianran introduced that, because Osaka consular district boasts massive quality educational resources and unique advantages in social and economic development, it has become one of the regions in Japan with the most frequent educational exchanges with China. Japanese universities and research institutions in Osaka consular district have attracted 25,000 Chinese students to study and work. Meanwhile, they have signed numerous cooperation agreements with Chinese universities and research institutions for student exchange and joint research.<sup>2</sup>

On July 9, 2021, the 7th China-Japan Conference on Education Exchange & Cooperation was successfully held. Under the theme of “China-Japan Educational Exchanges in the Post-pandemic Era”, the event was held online and offline for the first time. It covered the China-Japan University President Forum and China-Japan High School Education Forum for discussion on such topics as “Training of High-level Talents in the Post-pandemic Era”, “China-Japan International Education Cooperation in the Post-pandemic Era”, “Reform on High School Education and Teaching in China

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<sup>1</sup> 人民网：《“OneAsia 亚洲节 2022” 在东京举办 促进中日文化交流》，2022 年 4 月 11 日，<http://japan.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0411/c35421-32396246.html>，2022-08-16。

<sup>2</sup> 人民网：《深化人文领域交流 第六届中日教育交流会举办》，2019 年 11 月 28 日，<http://japan.people.com.cn/n1/2019/1128/c35421-31478536.html>，2022-08-16。

and Japan”, and “China-Japan High School Exchange and Cooperation”. Secretary-General of China Education Association for International Exchange Wang Yongli put forward three expectations for cooperation in education between China and Japan in the future. The first is to pay attention to the current situation and support the long-term, sound and steady development of China-Japan relations. The second is to focus on changes and further deepen education exchanges and cooperation between the two countries. The third is to look into the future and jointly promote the construction of a community of shared future for mankind.<sup>1</sup>

### (3) Sports

The years 2021 and 2022 were designated as the “China-Japan Cultural and Sports Exchange Promotion Year”. The Tokyo Olympic Games held in Japan in 2021 and the Beijing Winter Olympic Games held in China in 2022 provide a golden opportunity for the exchange of the two peoples.

Both countries have provided support for the other in the preparation of the events. To support the Tokyo Olympic Games, China sent the largest Olympic delegation ever overseas, while the Japanese delegation to the Beijing Winter Olympic Games is also the largest since it participated in the Winter Olympic Games for the first time.

According to the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, the impression of the Chinese represented by the younger generation on Japan has been improved through the Beijing Winter Olympic Games. The report on the Japanese support for the Beijing Winter Olympic Games and Chinese athletes on social media has also received positive response in China.<sup>2</sup>

### (4) Tourism

As an important measure to implement the consensus reached during the first meeting of the China-Japan high-level consultation on the cultural and people-to-people exchange, China-Japan Tourism Forum aims to promote cooperation in tourism between the two countries and expand exchanges of youths and at the sub-national level.

On December 5, 2019, the Chinese and Japanese governments organized the first China-Japan Tourism Forum at Hokuto, Yamanashi, Japan. Focusing on the goal of expanding personnel visits of the two countries in a balanced manner and striving to exceed 15 million as soon as possible, the two sides reached a consensus on further strengthening cooperation and interaction between the tourism industry of the two countries.<sup>3</sup>

On December 7, 2021, the 2nd China-Japan Tourism Forum was held in Shaoxing, Zhejiang, China. Under the theme of “Using High-tech Means to Promote the Recovery and Development of Tourism

<sup>1</sup> 中国教育国际交流协会：《第七届中日教育交流会在青岛成功举办》，2021年7月9日，<http://www.ceaie.edu.cn/zongheyuyanfabu/bumendongtai/2721.html>, 2022-08-17。

<sup>2</sup> 日经中文网：《夏目英男：冬奥成为促进日中理解的契机》，2022年2月21日，<https://cn.nikkei.com>, 2022-08-16。

<sup>3</sup> 新华网：《第一届中日旅游论坛在日本成功举办》，2019年12月6日，[http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2019-12/06/c\\_1125313687.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2019-12/06/c_1125313687.htm), 2022-08-16。



in China and Japan in the Post-pandemic Era”, representatives from the tourism industry and sub-national level of both sides exchanged their opinions. During the forum, *Shaoxing Declaration* was also released. The 3rd China-Japan Tourism Forum is planned to be held in Wakayama, Japan, in 2022.<sup>1</sup>

#### (5) Health

As an important meeting within the framework of the Global Health Forum, the Sino-Japan Health Forum in the New Era aims to promote friendly exchanges between China and Japan as well as practical cooperation of the two sides in green development, carbon neutrality, medical treatment and healthcare.

On December 22, 2020, the First Sino-Japan Health Forum in the New Era was held. It was generally agreed that, in response to the challenges brought by a prolonged pandemic, China and Japan, as two major economies in the world, should work hand in hand to carry out more in-depth and practical cooperation in green development, carbon neutrality, medical treatment and healthcare, and healthy urban life, and shoulder common responsibilities to make joint efforts for global environmental protection and health. Meanwhile, China and Japan enjoy huge potential and broad prospects for cooperation in the field of medical treatment and health care. The two sides can actively cooperate in such areas as vaccine and therapeutics development and equitable distribution, bilateral and multilateral personnel exchanges, resumption of work and production, and construction and improvement of public health governance systems.<sup>2</sup>

On June 3, 2021, the 2nd Sino-Japan Health Forum in the New Era was held. It is generally agreed among the guests from China and Japan that the two countries uphold the concept of “Human Health · Earth Health”, and boast huge potential and broad prospects for cooperation in the field of medical treatment and health care. The two sides should realize complementary advantages and resource sharing, and make efforts to improve global health through multi-leveled and wide-ranging cooperation in medical treatment and health care.<sup>3</sup>

#### (6) Exchanges at Sub-national Level

The exploration of China for establishing the relationship of sister cities started in Japan. After the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan in 1972, Tianjin and Kobe officially became the first pair of sister cities in June of the following year. Six pairs of sister cities had been formed by China from 1973 to 1978 and all of them were between China and Japan. Since then, more pairs of sister cities have been formed by China. So far, China and Japan have formed 393

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<sup>1</sup> 中华人民共和国文化和旅游部：《第二届中日旅游论坛在绍兴举办》，2021年12月8日，[https://www.mct.gov.cn/whzx/whyw/202112/t20211208\\_929663.htm](https://www.mct.gov.cn/whzx/whyw/202112/t20211208_929663.htm)，2022-08-16。

<sup>2</sup> 人民网：《中日新时代健康论坛举行》，2020年12月24日，<http://gs.people.com.cn/n2/2020/1224/c183356-34491726.html>，2022-08-16。

<sup>3</sup> 日本医疗国际化机构：《第二届中日新时代健康论坛成功举办》，2021年6月7日，<https://ngmo.or.jp/cn/?p=987>，2022-08-16。

pairs of sister cities.<sup>1</sup> These sister cities have promoted friendly people-to-people exchanges and common development on both sides.

In the beginning, the sister cities were mostly of higher administrative level or historical and cultural cities. Typical examples include Shanghai, Beijing, Xi'an, and Hangzhou in China, and Yokohama, Osaka, Kyoto and Tokyo in Japan. With the deepening of the bilateral relations and economic connection, more and more small and medium-sized cities or cities with distinctive features were chosen as the sister cities between China and Japan. In addition to mutual visits, more forms of exchanges at the local level were adopted, like sister schools, sister radio stations, sister hospitals, and sister ports, injecting new connotations into bilateral relations.<sup>2</sup>

On April 6, 2021, the activity to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the sister cities between Luoyang and Okayama, "Ring for Blessing in Baima Temple and Changquan Temple", was held simultaneously in both cities. Since becoming sister cities in 1981, the two cities have committed to openness, shared development opportunities, explored new areas of cooperation, and deepened exchanges and interactions, to jointly promote their steady and sustained friendship. Baima Temple in Luoyang City and Changquan Temple in Okayama have also maintained mutual visits for exchanging Buddhist culture, which deepened the mutual understanding between the two cities.<sup>3</sup>

On June 17, 2022, the China-Japan Economic and Environmental Exchange and Cooperation Forum 2022 opened in Suzhou's Xiangcheng Economic and Technological Development Zone. In April 2020, Xiangcheng District was approved to become the China-Japan (Suzhou) Local Development Cooperation Demonstration Zone, becoming the only demonstration area covering the whole region at the county level in China. During the forum, Xiangcheng District announced the latest achievements of its cooperation with Japan. Meanwhile, it took the opportunity to gather with Chinese and Japanese enterprises, representatives of financial institutions, and Japan-related institutions online to deepen cooperation and seek common development.<sup>4</sup>

On July 21, 2022, the Exchange Meeting for the 40th Anniversary of the Friendship between Shandong Province and Yamaguchi Prefecture and Shandong - Japan Sister Cities Exchange Week opened in Jinan. Under the theme of "Revisiting the Original Aspiration for a Brighter Future", the event aims at setting an example for sister city cooperation at the sub-national level between China and Japan and contributing to the building of a China-Japan relationship that answers the needs of the new era.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 参见日本中国友好协会: <https://www.j-cfa.com/document/>, 2022-09-01。

<sup>2</sup> 日本東方新報:《日中友好城市温暖彼此》, 2022年9月2日, [http://www.livejapan.cn/static/content/review/review\\_sound/review\\_sound\\_editorial/2022-09-02/1015337494377533440.html](http://www.livejapan.cn/static/content/review/review_sound/review_sound_editorial/2022-09-02/1015337494377533440.html), 2022-9-14。

<sup>3</sup> 洛阳市人民政府外事办公室:《钟声越洋传友谊 文明互鉴开新篇 纪念洛阳市与冈山市缔结友好城市40周年祈福鸣钟活动顺利举行》, 2021年4月7日, <http://www.lywqb.gov.cn/newsshow.php?id=656>, 2022-9-14。

<sup>4</sup> 人民网:《2022中日经济与环境交流合作论坛在苏州相城举办》, 2022年6月21日, <http://js.people.com.cn/n2/2022/0621/c360301-40004388.html>, 2022-08-16。

<sup>5</sup> 中国新闻网:《(中国)山东—日本友城交流周在济南开幕》, 2022年07月21日, <https://www.chinanews.com.cn/gn/2022/07-21/9808958.shtml>, 2022-08-16。

## (7) Youth

In October 2018, former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited China. The leaders of the two countries agreed to send 30,000 young people to each other's country for cultural exchange and mutual learning in the next five years and to designate 2019 as the "China-Japan Youth Exchange Promotion Year". To this end, the Foreign Ministers of the two countries signed the *Memorandum between the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Strengthening Youth Exchanges*.<sup>1</sup> The following activities were jointly organized by China and Japan in the "China-Japan Youth Exchange Promotion Year."

On January 12, 2019, the "China-Japan Friendship Adult Ceremony" was held at the Embassy of Japan in China. According to Kyodo News, the China-Japan Friendship Adult Ceremony began in 2011 as a part of exchanges at the grassroots level. It was proposed by Japanese students in China and has been organized nine times.<sup>2</sup> Taking adulthood as an opportunity, the students will continue to uphold the concept of China-Japan friendship in their future lives and become a bridge for people-to-people exchanges between China and Japan.

In the second half of 2019, several activities of the "Sakura Science Exchange Program" were organized in Japan.<sup>3</sup> In 2014, Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) started the "Sakura Science Exchange Program" (China-Japan Youth Science and Technology Exchange Program) to invite outstanding youths in China to Japan. More than 10,000 Chinese young people have visited Japan since the launch of the program to experience both Japan's cutting-edge science and technology and traditional culture.<sup>4</sup>

On December 23, 2019, the China-Japan Youth Friendly Exchange Convention was jointly held by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the China-Japan Friendship Association. State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi pointed out in the congratulatory letter to the convention that the China-Japan relations have now reached a new historical starting point, and that young people of both countries should be fully aware of their responsibilities and strive to be the defenders of China-Japan friendship, the promoters of China-Japan exchanges, and the momentum of bilateral cooperation with persistent and concrete actions.<sup>5</sup>

Focusing on the "heart to heart" relations of young people shouldering the future of China and Japan, the Japan Foundation launched three programs, including "Program for High School Student

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<sup>1</sup> 日本国驻华大使馆：《“日中青少年交流促进年”认定活动官方日程》，2020年1月6日，[https://www.cn.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr\\_zh/00\\_000111.html](https://www.cn.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_zh/00_000111.html)，2022-08-17。

<sup>2</sup> 环球网：《深化两国青年交流，第九届中日友好成人仪式在北京举行》，2019年1月14日，<https://world.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrKkgZOH>，2022-08-17。

<sup>3</sup> 日本国驻华大使馆：《“日中青少年交流促进年”认定活动官方日程》，2020年1月6日，[https://www.cn.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr\\_zh/00\\_000111.html](https://www.cn.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_zh/00_000111.html)，2022-08-17。

<sup>4</sup> 科学技術振興機構：『パンフレット・報告書 | さくらサイエンスプログラム』（科学技术振兴机构：樱花科技项目），<https://ssp.jst.go.jp/pamph/>，2022-08-16。

<sup>5</sup> 人民网：《青春洋溢、携手同行 中日青少年友好交流大会在京举行》，2019年12月24日，<http://japan.people.com.cn/n1/2019/1224/c35421-31520612.html>，2022-08-16。

Exchanges”, “Window for China-Japan Exchanges” and “Program for Strengthening the Ties.”<sup>1</sup> During the China-Japan Youth Exchange Promotion Year, the Japan Foundation organized many China-Japan exchange activities, including the short-term visit of Japanese high school students to China from March 14 to 21, the university student exchanges from September 17 to 29, and “Heart to Heart: Long-term Visit of Chinese High School Students to Japan” and “Visit of Japanese High School Principals and Teachers to China” from November 1 to 5 in the first year of Beautiful Harmony (2019).<sup>2</sup> These activities have strengthened the mutual understanding of young people of the two countries and improved the quality and consistency of people-to-people exchanges.

In March 2022, the Chinese Embassy in Japan held “For a Shared Future - China-Japan University Students Forum for Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Normalization of Diplomatic Relations between China and Japan”. Yang Yu, charge d'affaires of the Chinese Embassy in Japan, said that the future belongs to the young people and the hope also rests with them. The bright future of China-Japan relations requires the joint efforts of the young generation of the two sides. He suggested Chinese and Japanese students should have the ability to think independently, be the bridges between China and Japan, and set the ambition to promote friendship between China and Japan.<sup>3</sup>

In June 2022, the Asian Youth Exchange Program of Peking University supported by the Ministry of Education of China completed the study of four courses. Launched in September 2021, the Asian Youth Exchange Program aims to promote profound friendship among the youth in Asia as well as mutual trust and understanding between talented youth in China and Japan in the future. During the program, more than 100 high school students from top high schools in China and Japan studied with professors of Peking University in artificial intelligence, chemistry and biomedicine, psychology and brain science, and liberal arts, to explore cutting-edge research topics and advanced achievements in related disciplines. Students from the two countries overcame the language barriers, gained inspiration, and enhanced friendship through the clash of ideas during live streaming and interaction on the online platform.<sup>4</sup>

## (8) Trade

Bilateral trade between China and Japan is the foundation of economic relations between the two countries. After the normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries, the bilateral trade volume grew continuously from 1 billion dollars in 1972 to 342.89 billion dollars in 2011, marking a major step almost every 10 years. Under the influence of multiple factors, the average annual growth rate was -0.67% in the nine years from 2012 to 2020, far lower than the previous

<sup>1</sup> 国際交流基金：『日中 21 世紀交流事業とは』（国際交流基金：《日中 21 世紀交流事业简介》），[https://xinlianxin.jpf.go.jp/zh/about\\_zh/](https://xinlianxin.jpf.go.jp/zh/about_zh/)，2022-08-16。

<sup>2</sup> 日本国驻华大使馆：《“日中青少年交流促进年”认定活动官方日程》，2020 年 1 月 6 日，[https://www.cn.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr\\_zh/00\\_000111.html](https://www.cn.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_zh/00_000111.html)，2022-08-17。

<sup>3</sup> 人民网：《驻日使馆举办“携手向未来——纪念中日邦交正常化 50 周年中日大学生论坛”》，2022 年 3 月 31 日，<http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0331/c1002-32389283.html>，2022-08-16。

<sup>4</sup> 北京大学国际合作部：《“亚洲青少年交流计划”第四次直播课暨结业仪式举行》，2022 年 6 月 21 日，<https://www.oir.pku.edu.cn/info/1035/6094.htm>，2022-08-18。

growth rate. Nevertheless, the trade between China and Japan bucked the overall downward trend to realize a year-on-year growth of 17.1% in 2021. The total trade volume reached an unprecedented height of 371.40 billion dollars. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Finance of Japan, Japan's import and export with China grew by 16.3% and 19.2% respectively, which is basically the same as the statistics of China.<sup>1</sup> From January to June 2022, the export of China to Japan reached 537.60 billion yuan, up 3.5% year-on-year.<sup>2</sup> With the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) officially coming into force, China and Japan, as major trading nations, established free trade agreement for the first time, which promoted the rapid growth of bilateral trade and brought greater development opportunities for trade cooperation between the two countries.<sup>3</sup>

On December 16, 2021, the 38th China-Japan Economic Knowledge Exchange Conference was held. Ma Jiantang, chief representative of the Chinese side and secretary of the Party Leadership Group of the Development Research Center of the State Council, pointed out that the bilateral trade between China and Japan grew by more than 20% year-on-year in the first three quarters of 2021, showing strong resilience and great potential. It further highlights the complementary advantages and mutual benefits of China-Japan economic and trade cooperation, which is in line with the laws of the market and in the interests of the two peoples. China has followed a people-centered development philosophy and pursued a new development vision that features innovative, coordinated, green and open development for the benefit of all. The Japanese side has proposed the "new capitalism" development concept that strives to balance growth and distribution. The two sides could expand regional and multilateral cooperations in the green and low-carbon economy, digital economy, and industrial chain and supply chain. Yasushi Kinoshita, chairman of the Development Bank of Japan, said that Japan and China face some common problems in the middle and long term, like the impact of the pandemic on the economy, countermeasures to climate change such as carbon neutrality, and the aging population. It is believed that the cooperation of two countries in related fields can provide forceful support for solving global issues and play a leading role for both sides to solve the previously mentioned problems.<sup>4</sup>

On December 27, 2021, the 15th China-Japan Energy Conservation and Environmental Protection Forum was jointly hosted by the National Development and Reform Commission of China, the Ministry of Commerce of China, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, and the Japan-China Economic Association, via video link. As a comprehensive forum approved by the State Council of China, the forum has been successfully held 15 times since 2006 and a total of 413 cooperation projects have been signed. It has become an important platform for cooperation between China and Japan in energy conservation, environmental protection and green

<sup>1</sup> 张季风：《中日经贸关系：“危”“机”并存，前景可期》，《东北亚学刊》2022年第2期，第3-14页。

<sup>2</sup> 国家发展改革委员会：《2022年1至6月我国对日本进出口情况》，2022年7月27日，[https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/fggz/jjmy/dwjmjzcfx/202206/t20220624\\_1331530.html?code=&state=123](https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/fggz/jjmy/dwjmjzcfx/202206/t20220624_1331530.html?code=&state=123), 2022-09-01。

<sup>3</sup> 中华人民共和国商务部公共商务信息服务：《RCEP红利显 中日经贸暖意浓》，2022年8月19日，<http://chinawto.mofcom.gov.cn/article/e/s/202208/20220803342259.shtml>, 2022-09-01。

<sup>4</sup> 中日经济交流网：《重要历史节点将至，中日如何加强经贸合作？》，2021年12月17日，<http://cjkeizai.j.people.com.cn/n1/2021/1217/c368505-32311027.html>, 2022-08-17。

development.<sup>1</sup> At the 15th Forum, the two sides expressed that they should tap their respective strength for mutual benefit and strive to realize economic recovery, green development and better livelihood while achieving the carbon peak and neutrality targets. The first is to expand the high-level opening up of the Asia-Pacific region. The second is to strengthen policy dialogue and exchanges. The third is to deepen cooperation in energy conservation and environmental protection.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 新华网：《第十五届中日节能环保综合论坛以视频方式举行》，2021年12月26日，[http://www.news.cn/2021-12/26/c\\_1128202491.htm](http://www.news.cn/2021-12/26/c_1128202491.htm)，2022-08-16。

<sup>2</sup> 人民网：《第十五届中日节能环保综合论坛举行 双方签署合作项目 11 个》，2021年12月27日，<http://japan.people.com.cn/n1/2021/1227/c35421-32317508.html>，2022-08-16。

# 05 Characteristics and Future Prospects of People-to-people Exchanges between China and Japan

The establishment of the China-Japan High-Level Consultation Mechanism on People-to-People Exchanges is of great significance in guiding the practice, improving the level, and enriching the connotation of the people-to-people exchanges between the two countries as well as advancing the friendship between the two peoples. The mechanism is the youngest one of the ten major Chinese-foreign people-to-people exchange mechanisms and the latest achievement in the institutionalized development of people-to-people exchanges---the third pillar for promoting major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, featuring profound historical foundations, great development potential, and close relation to the politics and economy of the two countries.

Firstly, the mechanism has profound historical foundations. Japan used for reference the advanced continental culture of China on a large scale in ancient times while China took Japan as a window for learning the achievements of western industrial civilization. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the strategy of "fostering bilateral relations by non-governmental contacts" provides a favorable atmosphere for the normalization of relations between the two countries in 1972, which injected new vitality into people-to-people exchanges between the two countries and marked the shift from the domination of non-government actors to the joint and coordinated efforts of the government and non-government actors in bilateral ties. The smooth establishment of the mechanism hinges on the profound historical experience of the people-to-people exchanges between the two countries and also provides an institutional platform for a China-Japan relationship consistent with the needs of the new era.

Secondly, the mechanism boasts great development potential. On one hand, China and Japan are neighbors separated by a strip of water.<sup>❶</sup> Both of them belong to the east Asian cultural sphere and show a strong sense of belonging to the common culture. The special historical and cultural background and geopolitical conditions can help the two countries build consensus, bridge differences, and release the greatest potential of people-to-people exchanges. On the other

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❶ 外交部：《王毅在纪念中日邦交正常化 50 周年研讨会开幕式上发表视频致辞》，2022 年 9 月 12 日，[https://www.mfa.gov.cn/wjzbzhd/202209/t20220912\\_10765250.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/wjzbzhd/202209/t20220912_10765250.shtml)，2022-09-16。



hand, with the deepening of economic globalization, the contents of people-to-people exchanges between China and Japan have been enriched to cover various fields like culture, tourism, education, sports, subnational cooperation, and trade, which are conducive to further development of people-to-people exchanges between the two countries.

Thirdly, the mechanism is closely related to the politics and economy of the two countries. Trade relations serve as the anchor and the propeller for China-Japan relations.<sup>1</sup> China had been Japan's largest import target country in 2002 and largest trade target country in 2007.<sup>2</sup> In 2021, Japan became the fourth largest trading partner of China. The growing economic interdependence of the two countries provides a powerful driving force for the governmental and people-to-people exchanges. Political relations also have a significant impact, as differences remain sensitive between the two countries on such issues as history, territory and sovereignty. When the issues intensify, the people-to-people exchanges would suffer from great fluctuation. Notably, however, people-to-people exchanges in turn have a great influence on political mutual trust and trade cooperation. A wide-ranging, high-quality and normalized people-to-people exchange mechanism can create a favorable atmosphere for the ice-breaking development of political mutual trust and trade cooperation between China and Japan.

The year 2022 marks the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan. At such a new historical starting point, it has been a major undertaking of the era to further promote the development of people-to-people exchanges between China and Japan.

First of all, popular support for the people-to-people exchanges between China and Japan should be further cemented. On October 20, 2021, China International Publishing Group and Genron NPO held a press conference to announce the results of the public opinion survey on China-Japan relations in 2021. According to the survey, 70.9% of Chinese respondents think that China-Japan relations are "important (or relatively important)", a view shared by 66.4% of Japanese respondents. 80.6% of Chinese respondents and 56.4% of Japanese respondents think that historical issues are major problems in China-Japan relations. 62.4% of Chinese respondents and 56.7% of Japanese respondents regard territorial disputes as the critical issue hindering the development of China-Japan relations.<sup>3</sup>

The Japanese Cabinet office released a public opinion survey on diplomacy on January 21, 2022, and the results are shown in the following figure.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 张季风：《中日经济关系透视与展望》，“纪念中日邦交正常化 45 周年”国际学术研讨会，北京：中国社会科学院日本研究所，2017 年 8 月 26 日 -27 日。

<sup>2</sup> 根据日本贸易振兴机构（JETRO）数据统计。

<sup>3</sup> 中国网：《中国发布 | 2021 年中日关系舆论调查结果发布 两国公众认同中日关系重要性》，2021 年 10 月 20 日，[http://news.china.com.cn/2021-10/20/content\\_77822084.html](http://news.china.com.cn/2021-10/20/content_77822084.html)，2022-08-16。

<sup>4</sup> 参见：内閣府（内阁）：<https://survey.gov-online.go.jp/r03/r03-gaiko/2-1.html>，2022-08-16。

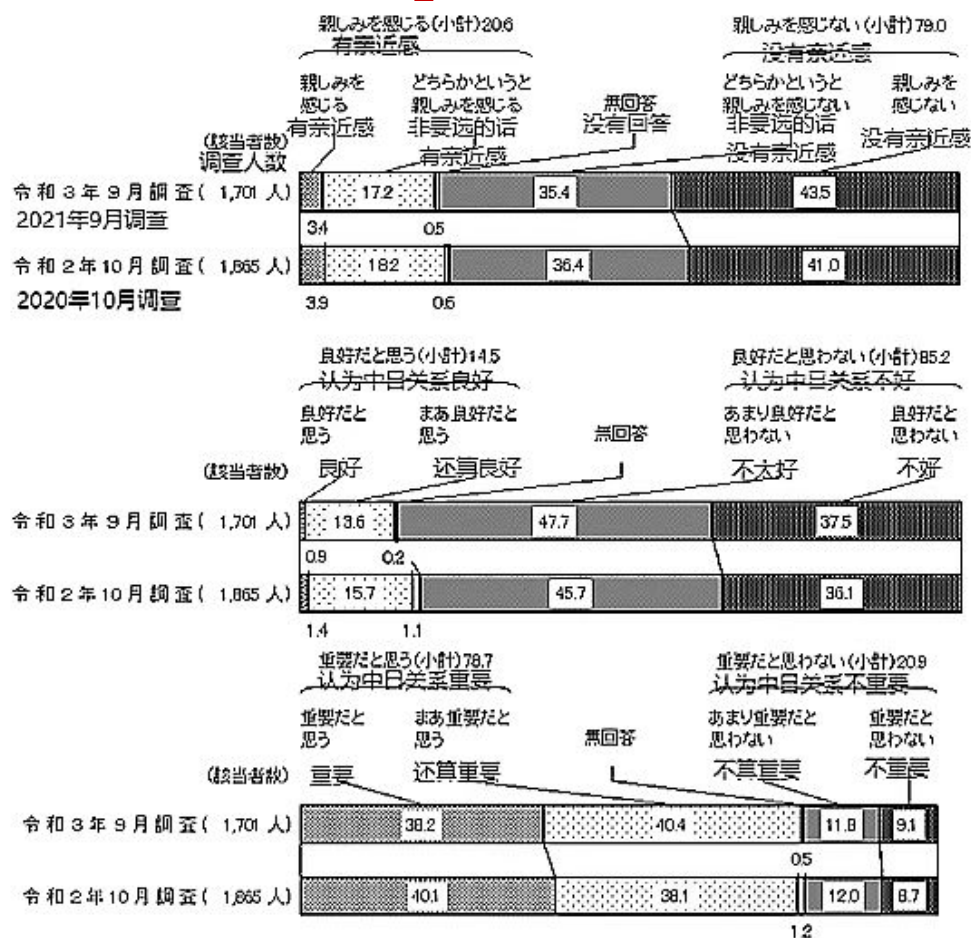


Figure 2 Japanese Cabinet Office Releases Public Opinion Survey on Diplomacy

According to the statistics, on one hand, both peoples agree that China and Japan, as close neighbors in East Asia, should maintain harmonious bilateral relations and shoulder the responsibility and obligation to promote regional stability. On the other hand, history, territory and security issues still affect the governmental exchanges and there is still much room for improvement in the goodwill of the two peoples towards each other. Therefore, it is necessary to cement the popular support for the people-to-people exchanges between China and Japan for deepening bilateral relations.

Secondly, attention should be paid to the two-way influence of the people-to-people exchanges between China and Japan and political mutual trust. As two big countries in East Asia, their bilateral relations have a far-reaching and significant impact on regional development and peace. At present, the relations between the two countries are characterized by "political estrangement yet economic closeness" and "governmental estrangement yet civilian closeness", because of the still existing differences on sensitive issues like history, territory and security. The exchanges between peoples and mutual learning between cultures are inherent features of human civilization. To maintain regional stability, China and Japan should adhere to the general direction of peace, friendship and cooperation, and pay more attention to the two-way influence of people-to-people exchanges and political mutual trust.

Finally, people-to-people exchanges between China and Japan should be made innovatively and intensively. Though the global people-to-people exchanges were hindered by the outbreak of

COVID-19 to some extent, the people-to-people exchanges between China and Japan show great consistency and tenacity. After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Japanese government, local governments and enterprises took the initiative to donate epidemic control supplies such as masks, goggles and protective suits to China. Many Chinese people were deeply moved by the words “Though we live in different lands, the same moon and sky make us one” and “Together we stand, my armors thine” on the packages.<sup>1</sup> Soon after, the COVID-19 pandemic spread in Japan. The Chinese government, local governments and the public also donated a large number of masks and other epidemic control supplies to Japan. On the packages of masks donated by a caring enterprise in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, it is written that “when it gets warm in spring, the wild geese return to the north and bring our good wishes across the ocean to our close neighbor.” Ancient Chinese poems are responded to by Japanese haikus. “I hope to pass on our true feelings in the language that our counterparts can understand.” This is the original intention expressed by Xia Ying, a teacher from the School of Economics of Zhejiang University. She had worked in Japan for many years.<sup>2</sup> As a Chinese saying goes, “it is in difficult times that one recognizes true friends.” In the face of the pandemic, the two governments and peoples assisted each other in their actions and encouraged each other through poems and haikus. It shows that the people-to-people exchanges have always been a strong bond between the two peoples, despite the changes in the external environment. In response to the impact of the pandemic, the people-to-people exchanges between China and Japan could focus on such new fields as public health, green development, smart city, and medical treatment and health care, while exploring new forms like “cloud dialogue, cloud exhibition, and cloud promotion.”<sup>3</sup>

The normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan fifty years ago changed the development track of the bilateral relations over the previous 100 years and promoted China-Japan relations along the course of friendship and cooperation. 50 years later, great changes have taken place in the external environment of bilateral relations against the background of major changes unseen in a century. Faced with the complex and fluid international situation, China-Japan relations are of vital importance for regional and global security and stability. At such a new historical starting point, both countries should give full play to the role of the mechanism, continuously enrich the connotation of the bilateral relations, and further expand the space for cooperation to provide public support for a China-Japan relationship consistent with the needs of the new era and make substantive and exemplary contributions to the construction of a community of East Asia culture and a community of shared future for mankind.

<sup>1</sup> 人民网：《外交部：日本暖心举动，中方铭记在心》，2020年2月5日，[http://japan.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0205/c35421-31572713.html?ivk\\_sa=1023197a](http://japan.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0205/c35421-31572713.html?ivk_sa=1023197a), 2022-09-01。

<sup>2</sup> 人民网：《通讯：山川异域同风雨——记中日民众借诗句互励共抗疫情》，2020年5月6日，<http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0506/c1002-31698505.html>, 2022-09-01。

<sup>3</sup> 熊淑娥：《疫情下中日民间交流新动向》，杨伯江等主编：《日本蓝皮书：日本研究报告（2021）》，北京：社会科学文献出版社2021年，第184页。

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