

# Welcome Address

for

the 12th Conference of AOA



**Mr. Yoshihiko Noda**  
**Prime Minister, JAPAN**

On the occasion of the opening of the 12th Conference of the Asian Ombudsman Association, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all honorable Ombudsmen of Asian nations gathered here today. I know that each of you is deeply dedicated to improving governance in your country and working very hard to assist your citizens. It gives me great pleasure therefore to be delivering this welcome address to you, as your host for this 12th meeting of the AOA, taking place here in Japan.

In this ancient region of the world which is remarkable for its innovation, you are responsible for the watching on the social system which promotes progress whilst preserving human dignity. It is highly important work. I am sure you all have knowledge and experience you wish to share with your counterparts from other countries and intend to work in close cooperation with each other, and I sincerely hope that the results of this contact within the Asian community will be of service to world development generally.

As you know, on 11th March this year Japan suffered the worst earthquake on record. Since that day, we have received words of encouragement and generous assistance from numerous countries including those represented here today, as well as from international organizations, nongovernmental organizations and the like. I would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude for all this support extended to us in our time of need.

Also, while you are with us, I do hope you will take note of the great efforts our country is making to recover from this calamity, through close cooperation between government and the citizens. We fully intend to respond to all the expressions of friendship so kindly extended by you which have aided our recovery.

In closing, I hope this conference will provide you with an opportunity to get know each other better and to consolidate bonds of friendship and mutual trust. Thank you very much.

## Welcome Address



**Mr. Tatsuo Kawabata**  
**Minister for Internal Affairs and**  
**Communications, JAPAN**

On behalf of my Ministry, may I heartily welcome all representatives from the participating nations and regions to the 12th Conference of the Asian Ombudsman Association, being hosted this year by Japan.

The Asian Ombudsman Association has been pursuing its activities with vigor for more than 15 years now, ever since the first Conference was held in Islamabad in 1996. In recent years, the AOA has supported research and study projects on the Ombudsman system in each Asian country, earning it the privileged position of being the online “center of information” for our movement. It is the second time Japan has hosted the Conference, the last being the 6th Conference in 2001, and we are honored to be able to add a new page to the Association’s history.

Coincidentally, the Administrative Counselor System, which plays an important role in remedying complaints regarding Japanese administration, celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. As you are already aware, the Japanese Administrative Counselor System is unique throughout the world. It is made up of civilian volunteers commissioned by the Ministry for Internal Affairs and Communication and provides a countrywide consultation service for the purpose of resolving complaints and receiving requests from the public regarding the various organs of the national administration.

I very much hope this Conference will deepen mutual understanding of the initiatives and approaches to problems being implemented in each of the participating nations and regions, plus their special characteristics, which demonstrate how the ombudsman service functions in that area, and I trust it will greatly contribute to the development of each participant’s own future activity.

In closing, I would like to take the opportunity to express our gratitude for the immensely kind assistance Japan received from all around the world when we were struck by the Great East Japan Earthquake in March this year. Thank you.



**Dr. Heita Kawakatsu**  
Governor,  
Shizuoka Prefecture, JAPAN

Nothing gives me more pleasure than to be able to welcome delegates from so many Asian countries and from all over Japan to the 12th Conference of the Asian Ombudsman Association being held this year here in Shizuoka, Japan.

Shizuoka Prefecture is located in the centre of Japan and enjoys a mild climate and a great variety of the graceful landscapes characteristic of Japan, including in particular our national symbol, Mount Fuji, the Minami-Alps mountain range to the north and the richly-varied coastline of Suruga Bay to the south. I do hope Conference participants will take advantage of this opportunity to visit scenic places in Shizuoka and to enjoy our abundant natural cuisine!

Here in Shizuoka Prefecture we put a lot of effort into community planning and building, in accordance with our fundamental principal of Shizuoka being 'Fuji no kuni' or 'Mount Fuji Country', which conveys the idea of an utopian place of physical as well as psychological wellbeing and prosperity. The two concepts which make up the word 'fuji', namely 'fu' meaning abundance, both material and moral, and 'shi' or 'ji' meaning samurai, symbolizing in Japan the spirit of public service, flourish side by side in our community and are the drivers of its activity. We favor so-called 'open prefectural politics' through the arrangement of public-friendly PR activities for our citizens and the generous provision of information on matters of concern to them, as well the provision of plentiful opportunities for public debate. In this way we promote 'administrative transparency' and actively encourage participation by the public in prefectural politics.

For these reasons we regard it as an honor that Shizuoka has been selected to host this AOA Conference in which honorable Ombudsmen from Asian countries are invited to discuss and share ideas for the development of a healthy social system in each of your countries and regions. I most sincerely hope that these discussions will be fruitful and I pray for all participants' further success in your most valuable work.

Lastly I would like to express my appreciation for all those who have devoted time and effort in bringing this Conference in Shizuoka together and I extend my warmest best wishes to all participants gathered here for progress in your most valuable work.