

My Vision for City Diplomacy

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The United Nations estimates that by 2050 about 70 percent of the world's population will be living in cities. This is why the 21st century is aptly called the "century of the city." In this era in which a city's dynamism is directly connected to the prosperity of its country, greater urbanization will give cities an even larger role to play in the international community. City diplomacy will become more essential than ever before from more practical points of view such as enhancing city vitality, solving urban problems, and nurturing relations of trust between cities. More can be achieved by city diplomacy, and more will be expected of city diplomacy.

My goal is to make Tokyo number one — the best city in the world. I am fully committed to achieving this goal by having the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games serve as a trigger to dramatically improve our city's functionality; making Tokyo a global city that is a magnet attracting talent, money, and information from around the world; and having Tokyo, as a mature city, become a pleasant and comfortable place offering a good quality of life. Tokyo will create the future. This is my vision.

Since assuming office in February 2014, I have been actively leading the city diplomacy of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) as a very effective means to realize this vision. As of December 2014, I have visited eight cities in five countries — Sochi, Beijing, Seoul, Tomsk, Moscow, Incheon, London, and Berlin — for such purposes as better preparing for the 2020 Games and strengthening relations with our friendship cities.

These visits have taught me how important it is for city leaders to visit other cities in person and build personal relationships with their counterparts, and how essential it is for the local governments and the central government to collaborate with each other.

I have incorporated into our TMG policies much of what I gained through firsthand experiences during these overseas visits; this includes the review of the venue plans for the 2020 Games. The local government is tasked with providing services closely related to citizen lives, so its city diplomacy should bring about tangible benefits to its residents. City diplomacy may also have the potential to complement and help the nation's diplomatic efforts, as can be seen from the fact that my official visit to Beijing last April helped create an environment conducive to better bilateral relations between Japan and China.

In December last year, we compiled the TMG Basic Strategy for City Diplomacy with the aim of advancing our city diplomacy in a more strategic and comprehensive manner.

In the strategy, city diplomacy involves all international activities by the TMG, and the objectives to be achieved through city diplomacy are set as: 1) successful delivery of the 2020 Games, 2) solving issues common to the world's metropolises, and 3) making Tokyo a global city.

The strategy also clarifies the key principles for city diplomacy as:

- The TMG shall strategically implement city diplomacy as an effective means to realize policies that will contribute to Tokyo's advancement.
- City diplomacy shall be a TMG-wide endeavor undertaken comprehensively and it must aim at improving the lives of the residents of Tokyo and ensuring that the benefits gained will be returned to them.
- The TMG's city diplomacy shall be conducted in cooperation and collaboration with the central government, and it shall aim at contributing to the international community.

It describes how the TMG plans to implement bilateral city diplomacy as well as a multilateral version of city diplomacy. Tokyo aims to build and strengthen relations with 30 cities by 2020.

In bilateral city diplomacy, we will strategically choose cities with which we should build cooperative relationships, and pursue some form of cooperation and partnership flexibly in accordance with objectives and needs. In multilateral city diplomacy, we will promote practical joint projects that contribute to solving issues common to the world's metropolises and facilitating collaboration and exchanges. We will actively promote city diplomacy by using an 8 billion yen fund to develop human resources, which is slated for launch in fiscal 2015.

In Japan, there is much debate over the pros and cons of overconcentration of resources in Tokyo. However, we must break away from the mind-set of fighting for a larger share of the limited pie within Japan; each city must pursue its own suitable growth model and work hard to raise its power and attractiveness by competing with each other.

With a firm sense of mission as the governor of Japan's capital and the host city for the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, I am determined to devote myself wholeheartedly to tackling the challenges that confront us.