

Japan's New Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara

On Friday 17 September, Mr Seiji Maehara was appointed as Japan's new foreign minister as part of Prime Minister Naoto Kan's cabinet reshuffle. Mr Kan had been re-elected as President of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) earlier in the week on Tuesday 14 September.

Foreign Minister Maehara is a law graduate who was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1993, representing a district of his hometown, Kyoto. He has previously been president and vice president of the DPJ and before being appointed as foreign minister, he was Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism and Minister of State for Okinawa and Northern Territories Affairs.



Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara

For the Reshuffled Kan Cabinet, see: www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/kan/meibo/daijin/index_e.html
For a profile of the Foreign Minister, see: www.mofa.go.jp/about/hq/profile/maehara.html

Japanese Prime Minister speaks for peace at the 65th commemoration of Nagasaki and Hiroshima

At this year's Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony (6 August) and Nagasaki Peace Ceremony (9 August), Prime Minister Naoto Kan reaffirmed his government's determination to work towards a world without nuclear weapons. As the only country to have experienced nuclear devastation in war, the Prime Minister said that he believed Japan has a moral responsibility to lead actions to realize this.

Prime Minister Kan also spoke of his personal motivation behind his efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons. Studying physics at university, he learned about the Pugwash Conferences through which Dr Albert Einstein and Japanese scientist Dr Hideki Yukawa, who had both worked on the development of atomic bombs, had called for the abolishment of nuclear weapons. Mr Kan said: "What they were faced with was a contradiction—science, which should have contributed to the happiness of humanity, had created nuclear weapons, which threatened the survival of humanity...the desire grew within me to play a part in resolving this contradiction."

For the full text of the two speeches, see:
www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/kan/statement/index_e.html

Prime Minister Naoto Kan announces concrete contributions in four areas at the UN General Assembly

At the General Debate of the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Prime Minister Naoto Kan announced Japan's intention to make concrete contributions in the four areas of—

- (i) **assistance to developing countries**, including leading efforts towards meeting the MDGs and strengthening the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD),
- (ii) **the global environment**, speaking of the need to halt the loss of biodiversity,
- (iii) **nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation**, including Japan's appointment of 'Special Communicators for a World without Nuclear Weapons', and
- (iv) **peacekeeping and peace-building**, through investments in assistance to PKO training centres and developing human resources.

Prime Minister Kan also stressed the importance of UN reform, stating reform was important in order to address global issues appropriately, and that reform was indispensable for the Security Council to have legitimacy that reflects the realities of the international community. Japan strongly aspires to be a permanent member of the Security Council.

Japanese Nobel Laureates

Two Japanese scientists, **Professors Eiichi Negishi and Akira Suzuki**, were jointly awarded the **Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2010** which they share with the American scientist Professor Richard F. Heck.

The three scientists were awarded the prize for having developed new methods for making carbon-carbon bonds. Being able to join carbon atoms together is a key step in the process of building complex molecules, and this has great significance for organic chemistry contributing to medicine and other areas of everyday life.

Professor Negishi (75) is a chemistry professor at Purdue University in America. Emeritus Professor Suzuki (80) works at Hokkaido University. Both Negishi and Suzuki did post-doctoral work at Purdue University under another Nobel Laureate, Professor Herbert Brown.

In an interview with the Editor-in-Chief of Nobelprize.org Adam Smith, Professor Negishi, who developed metal-based reactions, said that he was still 'in awe of the power of transition metals'*.

Japan now has 18 Nobel Laureates.

* Ei-ichi Negishi—interview. 14 Oct. 2010
http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/chemistry/laureates/2010/negishi-telephone.html