

## **Message from Mana Takatori, newly appointed Director General of the Japan Foundation London**

Hello, my name is Mana Takatori and I am the new Director-General of the Japan Foundation London.

While I have only recently arrived in the UK to take up the appointment of Director-General, this is actually my second time working in the London office having previously worked here eleven years ago. The three wonderful years I spent in London at that time passed so quickly, and I returned to Tokyo with many happy memories having made many lasting friendships, and having had the opportunity to become acquainted with so many intelligent, enthusiastic and inspirational people working hard to foster cultural and intellectual exchange between the UK and Japan.



Since returning this year, while reuniting with old friends and acquaintances, I have also had the opportunity to meet many new people and attend as many as possible of the huge variety of events held in this cultural capital, and once again, I have been very much impressed by the warmth and depth of understanding shown by people here in the UK towards Japan.

From the kindness and compassion of the many people who still remember, sympathise and extend their support to those affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011, to the sincerity and knowledge of scholars who I have had the opportunity to hear engage in intense and well-informed debate on contemporary issues in Japanese society and politics; from the dazzling speeches and presentations in Japanese made by university students at our speech contest; the enthusiastic applause and nuanced impressions of the audience at each screening during our Touring Film Programme; to hearing the new generation of scholars in Japanese studies keenly present their research and future plans at our Post-graduate Workshop; these encounters have left a huge impression on me and inspired me to continue to strive to help cultivate cultural exchange through the activities of the Japan Foundation in the UK.

As well as acting as Director General of the Japan Foundation London, I have also been appointed Regional Director for Europe. Twenty-five years ago, I was posted to France where I worked for three and a half years. Now the Japan Foundation has seven cultural centres and institutes in Europe including the London office, and I look forward to having the opportunity to promote cultural exchange and explore common interests and challenges with people across Europe as a whole.

I hope to have an opportunity to meet many of you at future events and other occasions, and I hope that I can continue to count on the same generous co-operation and understanding shown to my predecessor, Mr Kenichi Yanagisawa. The Japan Foundation London will try to be as open as possible for all who wish to contribute further to cultural exchange with Japan and we will always welcome your suggestions and advice.

Mana Takatori

Regional Director for Europe/ Director-General, London Office  
The Japan Foundation