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Myriad Leaves

JLGC Newsletter

January 2010

New Year at Sensoji Temple, Asakusa Ward,
Tokyo. Picture ©JNTO

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Myriad Leaves is the English language title for the earliest collection of Japanese poetry, *Manyōshū*. It contains 4,516 *waka* poems, the last of which is dated AD759. There is uncertainty over the intention of the title: it could mean either 'Collection of ten thousand leaves' or 'Collection for ten thousand generations'.

2 *New Year Messages*

Seasons greetings to you all.

In celebration of 20 years of the office in London, with the cooperation of the LGA, Japan Local Government Centre last year held a celebratory seminar at Local Government House in November to which many came, with both British and Japanese support including that of Councillor Richard Kemp. A great many thanks to all of you who have worked with us and long supported us through the years.

As a result of last year's credit crunch and from being in the midst of what is said to be the worst financial situation for 100 years, both British and Japanese local governments have found themselves confronting a serious predicament. Despite the reduction in tax revenue due to the financial downturn there is the need for more funds to tackle unemployment, poverty and financial problems. We are seeing swelling deficits in public accounts as a result of increasing requests from citizens for expanding funding in welfare, education and medical care, and at the same time cannot expect enough support from central government also burdened with the same public finance deficits. As a result of this individual local authorities and their residents will not overcome these problems through their own endeavours and creativity alone.



However, local authorities everyday through out the world, beg the question is it not already opinion that on the further implementation of improvement and efficiency, after so many years that frankly the scope of such exercises up until now have reached its limit? In order to carry out further cuts in annual expenditure on top of this, is it not that we will have to cut public services? Perhaps this is the case. However, many local authorities worldwide engaging in innovative service day and night will abhor such a strategy. As the organising and thinking in these matters is so fundamentally different between local and central government, it is surely the case that they are offering strategies to problem solving from completely different points of view.

We at CLAIR unfortunately do not have the power to offer a clear solution for problem solving. However, in introducing the initiatives of Japanese local authorities, helping exchange between local authorities in Japan and overseas and through activities helping human resource development in both directions we have up to now positively engaged in these projects and from here forth will continue with all our energy. I hope that in some way this is useful for solving these problems. Even though these really are difficult times, there is the chance for transformation. As Japan is also in the midst of difficult finances, JLGC is trying its hardest to carry out its work efficiently, so with the same support as this year we will endeavour to work with you in the next.

Director Noboru Fujishima, CLAIR London Office.

Happy New Year!

I wish you all good health and prosperity in the coming year.

Today, in the various fields of politics, finance, society and culture, the relationship between the United Kingdom and Japan is becoming markedly deeper. Both countries as mature, developed nations are collaborating in tackling a host of global problems, including economic issues and threats to security.

In the midst of this trend, from Autumn 2008 until December last year a series of activities celebrating 150 years of diplomatic relations between Japan and the UK, known as JAPAN-UK 150, took place in a wide range of fields embracing culture, the arts, sports, education and science. Over 450 events, covering all areas and for all ages, promoting exchange between our two countries were held throughout the United Kingdom. Through these events, I feel we have been able to deepen the public's understanding of the close relationship between the peoples of Japan and the UK.

Furthermore, in strengthening our bilateral ties, the roles of our two countries' local governments and regional organisations have also increased in significance. With globalisation unfolding at an accelerating pace and in view of the steady decentralisation of power under way, the regions have become an important factor in efforts to address global issues. I believe that, through local authorities and regional international exchange organisations, exchange at "grass-roots" level is making a great contribution to the peace and prosperity of both our countries.

Working together with the Japan Local Government Centre on the JET Programme, we will continue this year to deepen cooperation with other relevant organisations in the UK, seeking the further advancement of the important relationship between our two countries. I ask for your valuable support and understanding in this endeavour.



His Excellency Mr Shin Ebihara
Ambassador of Japan to the Court of
St James's

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme is an official Japanese Government scheme to improve foreign language teaching in schools and to promote international understanding. The programme was established in 1987, with 848 participants from four countries. Since then, the number of participants has increased significantly: there are currently over 4600 graduates from 38 different countries on the programme. The JET Programme represents one of the greatest initiatives in the field of human and cultural relations. Its expansion shows the Japanese Government's commitment to the programme and overwhelming support for the scheme at a local level. There are 2 positions available for UK graduates on the JET Programme: Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) and Coordinator for International Relations (CIR).



JLGC News

Goodbye to London

JLGC Communications Officer Jason Buckley is sadly leaving the office in January to return to his native Australia. Jason worked with JLGC for nearly two years, responsible for a wide variety of projects including coordinating our annual Japan Day Seminar, organising material and logistics for JLGC's stand at the Local Government Association annual conference, as well as developing the office website and content, translating and editing a myriad of articles for the newsletter and the website, on subjects such as municipal strategies, recycling, employment and technology. Farewell to Jason who is taking a well earned leisurely return trip via Europe with a stop over in Japan before arriving home.

Best wishes to Jason starting a new life and family back in Australia from JLGC .

JETAA International 2009 Kingston, Jamaica

JETAA International, the JET Programme Alumni Association, met in sunny Kingston, Jamaica in Winter of 2009 for this year's AGM. There was discussion on the current state of the JET programme and input from JETAA International in shaping the future of the programme. Delegates also provided an overview of the international activity of JETAA, outlining measures to support interest by and the formation of new chapters in Korea, India, Thailand, Singapore and China. UK delegate Stuart Butchers provided an update of the charity effort for the elected charity - Room to Read. It was determined that it would be easier for each country to make their donations directly to Room to Read chapters in their respective countries instead of converting money into a particular currency and donating one lump sum. British representatives from JETAA-UK, supported by JLGC, also expressed an aspiration to build stronger relationships with AJET in Japan, an independent association representing participants while they are on the programme. New structures for grant arrangements for chapters were provided by CLAIR Tokyo staff and an overview of recent JET related activity: The JET Streams Newsletter, Chapter Flyers at the Returnees' Conference, the CLAIR JET Alumni publication and the completion of the JETAA survey which this year targeted those who returned from the programme in 2007.

Delegates undertook group brainstorming sessions on the best use of GIA funding and Stuart hosted a session exploring the potential for more JETAA Self Funding particularly in relation to costs associated with the jetalumni.org website (through sponsorship and advertising.) Many chapters are already utilising social networking sites and the UK seems to be significantly more advanced than other countries in terms of their website.

European Country Representatives then took part in a regional meeting. An aspiration was expressed to continue to build on strong links between countries and to build local links with UK university Japanese societies, The Japan Society, JNTO and other relevant bodies. It was also acknowledged that stronger links with the press need to be fostered to promote the events and work of JETAA. Ideas were shared for Europe Wide events including a photo, film, book or manga related event.

JET Promotion in Wales Recruiting 2010 ALTs and CIRs

JLGC staff are involved in promoting the JET Programme at universities throughout the UK, and this year spent several days on the road touring the beautiful valleys and universities of Wales, giving presentations about what graduates might expect on the programme living in Japan and working in schools assisting with English language instruction and at

local government helping with international activities and non-Japanese citizens living in towns and villages. This years applications were up on last years by 60 percent, no doubt as a result of a difficult graduate recruitment market, as well as the fact that the JET Programme offers comparatively high rates of pay compared to the average UK graduate salary. The presentations usually have a Q&A session for people interested in applying and this year questioned ranged from asking if JET is only an English programme for UK Passport holders or can other English speakers apply; is this the right kind of course for TESOL graduates to be going on; about Japanese language learning support, the possibility of getting a placement near a friend, what kind of training do you get before you teach on your own; or is there any kind of probation period; are there any costs that need to be paid up front in advance, like rent or bond on an apartment is it difficult socialising with Japanese people who don't speak English.

Local Government in Japan Y1 trillion in new grants for local governments

The central government plans to establish new grants worth 1.1 trillion yen (£7.5 billion) for local governments under the state budget for 2010 and use them to replace existing subsidies for sewerage, road and other projects, government sources said. The step is intended to help local governments finance projects more freely, the sources said. Unlike subsidies whose use is limited to specific projects, the use of grants is basically left to municipalities' discretion .

The Finance Ministry plans to set the size of grants from the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism at 1 trillion yen (£6.8 billion) and that of grants from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries at 100 billion yen (£685.4 million), the sources said. The planned creation of the grants is a step taken in response to a request from the newly ruling Democratic Party of Japan.

Myriad Leaves 万葉

New for 2010...

The format of Myriad Leaves will be changing in the New Year to focus more on giving details about aspects of local government in Japan you are interested in.

We will also be launching an e-newsletter which will be sent out on a more regular basis with local authority news from Japan, developments in international relations and twinning arrangements between Japan and the UK, as well as regular news about JLGC's regular events and activities.

If you have any comments about the kinds of articles you would like to see in relation to local government and public service provision in Japan, and to register for the new e-newsletter please feel free to download our questionnaire from www.jlgc.org.uk and email the form back to mailbox@jlgc.org.uk.

We hope that you will find the new format interesting and exciting. Any further comments please contact Keith Kelly directly at:

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Japan Day Seminar 2009 20 Years of Japan-UK Relations at JLGC



・日英交流セミナー2009・

Japan Day Seminar 2009: The Recession One Year On – Strategies and Solutions for Local Communities

Local Government House, London – 23 November 2009

The event was opened by Cllr Richard Kemp, Deputy Chairman of the Local Government Association (LGA) and Chairman of its European and International Strategy Group. After welcoming delegates, Cllr Kemp introduced Michihiro Kayama, Chairman of the Council of Local Authorities



for International Relations of Japan (CLAIR). Mr Kayama expressed thanks to the LGA for co-hosting this year's Japan Day Seminar on account of its being the 20th anniversary of CLAIR's London office, the Japan Local Government Centre (JLGC), in London. The chairman highlighted the work undertaken by CLAIR between the UK and Japan, in particular the contribution of the JET Programme, paying tribute to the Japanese studies lecturer at Liverpool John Moore's University whose son had later followed her onto the programme. He hoped that this experience would be taken into account by the new government of Japan, which had been elected on account of the people's desire for change and as such CLAIR's existence could be under pressure. However, he stressed, it was important to take a long term perspective in order to deepen international bonds at the local level and hoped that this would be taken into account in any future discussions.



Cllr Kemp then thanked the chairman before moving on to his own presentation. He paid tribute to JLGC's 20 years in London and noted that what Japan had been undertaking for two decades through CLAIR, the rest of the world had only just started to do through the United Cities and Local Governments' organisation (UCLG). The CLAIR model therefore he argued could act as a template for the rest of the world to analyse the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and

threats faced by local government, he continued, and this had become apparent during his recent visit to a UCLG congress in China, where most other delegates reported that their national governments did not accord them sufficient power or resources and that such problems were in fact universal. However, the UK was arguably the most centralised state in Europe he maintained, noting that while the government now accepted the need for decentralisation it was still failing to deliver. National government should set overall strategies he stated, not micromanage communities, as all towns and cities are different. While all localities are different, this does not preclude them from learning from one another, he asserted. For instance, the work being undertaken by Chinese cities to mitigate against climate change or indeed the theme of the event, UK/Japan knowledge transfer about tackling the

recession. It would take a peculiar type of nationalist to disagree, he asserted.

Moving on to the event theme, he suggested that his own experience of serving as a councillor in Liverpool during the early 1980s recession and the later dot com boom crash had shown him that councils should not panic at the challenges which lay ahead.

The seminar then heard from Greg Clark, Adviser on City and Regional Development, UK Government. Greg thanked JLGC for the opportunity to speak at the event and hoped that it could become the first step on the path to a collaboration agenda of improved dialogue and learning between British and Japanese cities, which currently face a knowledge gap in collaboration and exploration of areas of potential connectivity.



The next speaker was Michitaka Nakao, formerly Director of Business Development, Japan External Trade Organisation London office (JETRO). Mr Nakao mentioned that he was currently unemployed after finishing an MBA course at Cambridge University's Judge Business School following his resignation from JETRO and this was a source of shame to be part of such a prestigious line up of employed speakers. Furthermore, he was

aware that many in Japan viewed JETRO as a waste of taxpayers' money and stressed that his presentation was based on his own personal views, formed under the previous Liberal Democratic Party administration and not those of JETRO. In particular he noted the emerging collaborative links in bioscience research between Kitakyushu in Japan and Liverpool in the UK.

The event then heard from Sarah Longlands, Director of Policy at the Centre for Local Economic Strategies. Ms Longlands outlined the centre's work and membership profile before going on to detail its resilience model, with particular regard to Portland, US and Yokkaichi, Japan.



Following a short break, a panel discussion was held between the previous speakers and Akiyuki Hamagami, Director General of the European Representative Office of Hyogo Prefectural Government. Mr Hamagami began by paying

respects to the victims of the on-going floods in Cumbria, before going on to outline the role of Hyogo's European presence and its efforts to attract visitors from Europe.

The panel discussion then took questions from the floor.

Q: Professor George Jones (London School of Economics): There has been a lot of discussion of what local government should do but could the panel outline what it thinks local government should not do?

A: Greg Clark: Local government shouldn't raise armies, run its own currencies, administer borders etc. but beyond this it has an entirely legitimate role in most areas of government, the question therefore is to examine what national governments are *not* good at and look at securing a balance. Of course there should be more devolution to local government but in terms of the UK it's important to appreciate the peculiar spatial geography and disparities between regions which are net fiscal positive and those which are net fiscal negative.

Michitaka Nakao: The answer as I see it is to examine where government should determine how much to act or not act in the development of local economies and to appreciate the clear role between public and private and where they interact. However, in all government functions there is a role for local government, though obviously this will vary, in particular local government knows better than central government how to access the key players in local business and has better knowledge about the needs of local industry.

Sarah Longlands: Local government shouldn't seek to grow the economy at the expense of the poorest in society by going simply for growth above all else and shouldn't try to second guess what the market will do. Instead local government should seek to ensure that the conditions are right to support local business and shouldn't perform roles best left to the private sector, nor that of central government such as the delivery of benefits. Finally, local government shouldn't wait for someone else to act first and should instead show leadership.

Akiyuki Hamagami: Local government should not ignore local people. Instead local government should seek a new way.

Richard Kemp: Local government shouldn't despair at economic conditions but instead seek out good ideas and use history to build on. Local government shouldn't wait for permission either, it should proceed more quickly. Rather than the Japanese company production method of Just In Time, local government should Just Do It, or Just Bloody Well Do It.

Q: Cllr Peter O'Neill (NE Derbyshire DC): I was interested to hear more about Gdansk's resilience model, particularly regarding the inertia once finance disappears and the role of local identity in this.

A: Sarah Longlands: Yes, local identity is key to promoting a local economy, whereas Portland traded on its environmental credentials and social equity as part of its city offer, whereas Gdansk used its identity as a trading city to boost its competitiveness.

Q: Richard Kemp: Taking this on board, have we gone too far with internationalism?

A: Greg Clark: Globalisation doesn't have to mean sameness, in fact distinctness is often a city's best tool in being competitive. It's important for cities to participate globally within an open system. Using the two examples given, Portland and Gdansk both have long term strategies: Portland bucked the trend on the West Coast in terms of not having a weak city planning system and rather than having competing municipalities consolidated them into one city unit. It's important to realise that the fiscal unit in a locality should be the same as the social and cultural unit.

Q: Richard Kemp: OK then, how distinct is Hyogo from other Japanese localities?

Akiyuki Hamagami: In many senses, very. Almost a little Japan.

Michitaka Nakao: I agree, globalisation should not be about trying to deny the uniqueness of cities. Identity is the spur of competitiveness, though when it comes to things such as promoting links between cities and regions around biotechnology issues, all of them claim to be the best, sadly.

Q: Cllr Ansuya Sodha (LB Barnet): In the local authority I represent as a councillor, the leadership have been pushing through policies to outsource as much as possible and introduce charges for better service. Are there any such movements in Japan?

A: Greg Clark: We shouldn't be so hasty as to discount the role outsourcing can play to benefit social policies, for instance in Australia local government has been successful in using outsourcing to build new businesses locally. To my mind local government has four roles: to represent; to provide essential services; to regulate; and to attract and promote investment and development. If we look at the last one, you can see in cities like Zurich and Singapore that they have used this to attract talent by offering good incentives to live there.

Sarah Longlands: I think there's a need to see outsourcing as being beyond the current efficiency agenda and in particular the Barnet example is one of lazy shorthand. You don't improve the lives of poor people by having such polarised debate about what is essentially a procurement issue and instead we should concentrate on how to get the best price for what we need.

Akiyuki Hamagami: The outsourcing debate is current in Japan but nowhere near as advanced as in the UK. I agree that there is a need to find ways to lower costs to local government while providing the best services to local people and as such I think there are a number of areas which could be considered suitable for outsourcing among Japanese local authorities, such as street cleaning, public transport and passport processing tasks.

Q: Edward Richards (Homes for Islington): I work for an arms length housing company and in doing so there is a separation of functions between us as a provider and that of the local council. Does the panel think that separation of functions can hinder efforts by local government to come out of recession?

A: Sarah Longlands: I think there will always be situations where service provision is separated from the elected local council, so I am not sure of the answer here.

Akiyuki Hamagami: I think local governments should always soak up the opinions of local people and respect them. In Hyogo we have local 'vision committees' to achieve this.

Michitaka Nakao: My experience of this is limited so my answer will be brief, but in those areas of Japan in which I worked it was always important to form working groups of local businesses in order to secure consensus in the region for any new programmes or areas of activity.

Greg Clark: I think it's important to examine geography rather than just functions and the role of leadership, in fact there's too much emphasis on functions and not enough on these two.

Richard Kemp then closed the event by thanking all speakers and guests and hoped that JLGC would continue in London for at least another 20 years. A reception then followed, which was addressed by Professor George Jones and Toshihiko Akamatsu of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, who both paid tribute to the work of JLGC in London over the past 20 years. Both were introduced by JLGC Director Noboru Fujishima, who also thanked delegates for attending.

The Devolved Regions System

Professor Shigeru Tamura, Niigata University,
Faculty of Law
Translated by Keith Kelly

The following article is a shortened translation of the article published in *Toshi-mondai Kenkyu*, "Research on Urban Issues" journal issue 62. The full translation will soon be available from <http://www.jlgc.org.uk/en/publicationsfromjapan.html>

Local Authorities in Japan are divided into over than 1,800 basic units, and subsequently the mood for a revision of the prefecture system is growing. With the publishing of findings from the Local Government System Research Council into a possible regional system of governance in February 2006, the post of minister responsible for the regions was established the following September. Following this the establishment of the cabinet secretariat panel for the "Regional Vision", the movement towards introduction of a regional system gained momentum. The debate on a regional system then heated up considerably in Kasumigaseki and Nagatacho (Japan's Whitehall and Downing Street) with the Japan Business Federation publicly announcing their "3rd intermediate proposal for a system of regions" and the Liberal Democratic Party publishing their "3rd intermediate report on a regional system". In particular in the Kinki area a lively debate is unfolding over the introduction of such a regional system, with Osaka prefecture governor Mr. Hashimoto as a proactive campaigner.

The establishment of a regional tier through the abolition and consolidation of the current prefectures which have existed for more than 120 years into larger regional units differs from the simple proposition to merge the prefectures. As devolutionary reforms progress, if a regional tier based on the principle that what can be done at local level should be left to the local level comes into being, then it is also expected that many functions of the government branch offices will be transferred to the regions. The regions will be best placed to implement regional economic policies and infrastructure improvement, environmental and job creation policies and the like, as they have a good understanding of the particular features of their areas.

However, following on from the results of the general election and the Democratic Party of Japan coming to power, the 'Regional Vision' panel was dissolved, and therefore the direction of the debate on a regional system has become uncertain.

The establishment of the prefecture system and historical developments

The current upper-tier administrative units of self-government in Japan, the prefectures, originate with the Meiji Government in 1868, reformed from the previous Tokugawa regime "han" feudal units of administration to the new governmental prefecture units of 9 "fu", 20 "ken" and 273 "han" to make up a total national unitary division of 302 units. In 1871 through the enforced abolition of the feudal domains the old "han" feudal units were fully abolished with the establishment of the "ken" prefecture unit and the creation of a newly despatched government-appointed "ken-chiji" or prefectural governor. The same year in July saw the formation of 3 "fu" and 306 "ken" but this was reduced merely 4 months later to 3 "fu" and 72 "ken". This was not a simple name change from the previously used "han" to "ken", but as the numbers of

units was very high with too many subdivisions and proved unwieldy, the result was further consolidation. The basis of a prefecture or "ken" was stipulated as "100 thousand goku" meaning a prefecture being an area producing at least 100 thousand "koku" of rice per year (1 koku= 140 litres).

After this reorganisation was further proceeded with by central government, and 1876 saw a system with 3 "fu" and 35 "ken" which was less than the current division into 47 prefectures. However, with opposition to what could be described as central government's overbearing manner implementing the structure, and an increase in activity by independence movements in the prefectures, the current formation of prefectures was decided upon when Kagawa prefecture separated from Ehime prefecture in December of 1888.

In the system of prefectures in the pre-war period, while having the character of local self-government, work was carried out under the auspices of branches of the state under a governor chosen by the central government. Also, in 1943, Tokyo-fu (urban prefecture) became Tokyo-to (metropolis) and Hokkaido stopped being outside the prefecture system.

With the advent of the 1960s and of Japan's continued economic growth and expanding economic sphere, the country's development demands, a growing population, the concentration of industry in the urban areas and the resulting depopulation of rural areas with consequently growing inequality between the regions, there were also problems of water supply in the urban areas. The debate became more lively on all sides underlining to the need for broader based local government. In the Tokai region of Aichi, Gifu and Mie Prefectures a merger was proposed by the financial community in this area, and a so-called "Hannawa Merger Plan" was advanced by the Kansai Economic Federation based in Osaka metropolitan prefecture (Han), as well as Nara (Na) and Wakayama (Wa) prefectures.

Also, in 1965 the results of the 10th Local Government System Research Council, the "findings on regional mergers", were disclosed, reflecting the developments regarding reconsolidation of areas. The findings were in favour of self-determined mergers, and that based on local referendum decisions, the Prime Minister should seek regular creation of mergers through resolutions in the National Diet on the basis of the requests according to the outcomes made by the assemblies of those areas involved. The following year a "Prefecture Merger Creation Bill" was presented to the National Diet. This bill was presented to the House of Councillors three consecutive times but no serious deliberation took place, and at the end of the process the bill failed.

After this law to regulate the administrative divisions of Japan was rejected, on followed the end of the period of rapid growth to be replaced by a period of stable economic growth, and this meant that the debate at government level concerning the limits of the prefecture system subsided.

At the same time however proposals for a regional system were frequent from business and industry and developed into demands for drastic changes in state and local government, centering on administrative efficiency, cost cutting and the reduction of red tape through the introduction of a regional tier.

Further, at end of the 1980s the debate on the future of the prefecture system saw the mass media, think tanks, political parties and academics producing various proposals on a system of regions or a federal structure. In particular there were proposals from the prefectures themselves, like the governor of Osaka prefecture personally publishing a proposal, as well as those of officer project teams, academics and the like, and they took many forms.

In replacing the current system of prefectures with a system

of regional government over a wide area, the system will be a two level structure of a region on the first level and cities, towns and villages as the next level within those regions.

The scope of the regional system will take into consideration social, economic, geographical, historical and cultural conditions, but various ways of thinking are possible. According to the conclusions of the 27th Local Government System Research Council in February 2006, the extent of each region will fundamentally be based on the present area of government ministries' regional branch offices and one of the three proposed solutions of either 9, 11 or 13 regional units

The process of changing over to a system of regions

As a general rule the whole country will move over to a regional system at the same time, but the preparations for cooperation between the state and concerned prefectures will already have been made and this will lead to a smooth change over.

As well as placing all decision making within the local assembly, assembly members will be directly elected by the citizens of the region. As far as the method of election is concerned, in addition to the current method of single-member electoral districts, the adoption of a system of proportional representation is also considered. The governor as head of the executive will be appointed on the basis of the same electoral process, but holding multiple elected offices will be prohibited.

Increasing local demands for finance will accompany the transfer of competences from the state, necessitating the transfer of an appropriate tax base. The creation of a new regional tax system which will fund the decentralised power systems is necessary, as is the adoption of a fiscal equalisation system which will take into account tax sources and financial needs.

In September of 2006 the submission of results by the 28th Local Government System Research Council saw the establishment of the post of minister responsible for the new system of regions, and saw more activity towards the introduction of a regional system by the state. In January of 2007 the cabinet secretariat established the regional system panel and released a mid-term report in March of 2008. Here, clarification of the benefits and responsibilities of putting government and politics close to the locality included correcting the over-concentration of government in Tokyo through moving branches to the regions, and effecting fiscal reform in administration through the reduction of overlapping services were stated. The establishment of wide-area economic and cultural spheres under the management of regions was also seen as offering merits, and in regard to national strategies and crisis management, central government would be able to have a stronger focus.

The LDP established the Regional System Research Panel in November 2004 which continued the debate. In November 2007 direct executive control over the regional system implementation office, raising its status, and in the mid-term report the continuation of the remaining central issues were considered. In July of 2008 the third mid-term report gave concrete conclusions. At the centre of this, as well as a draft demarcation being hammered out, there was also the highlighting of the need to have a goal of implementation between 2015 and 2017, and in advance of the election party manifesto "the passing of a law for the introduction of the regional system in 6 to 8 years" was also given as an election pledge. Further to this, in March of 2007 the Japan Business Federation publicly announced a "Draft plan for adopting a regional system - pointing towards eventual restructuring", and in a second proposal in 2008 went on to express expectations of strengthening disaster prevention and fire management, improving public order in regions, assistance for raising children, improving medical care provision as well as nursing care, independent promotion of industry and the development of employment

creation through the introduction of the regional system and that regional resources could be developed through the promotion and development of tourism. In this way the debate around implementing of the regional system had picked up speed in Kasumigaseki and Nagatacho.

There are of course various points of view that can be seen opposing a regional system. Even though the trend amongst governors tends to be positive, there are a few governors with a sceptical view. Before the regional debate became the driving force of the decentralisation of power, governors with an understanding of introducing a regional system were probably not in the majority. Also, it cannot be denied that recent debate on the regional system is being led by finance and industry. In particular through the process of municipal mergers, the membership of the National Town and Villages Association organisation has been massively reduced, and at the end of the 2008, the General Conference of that association adopted a special resolution "against coercion linking the merging of towns and cities to the regional system", and in countering the government's "fundamental plan for financial administration reform 2009 (draft bill)" indicated "strong opposition to the introduction of the regional system where the existence of towns and villages is unsure" It was further stated that "the debate so far on the introduction of the regional system has been lead by finance and industry and central government, and this is leading to a sense of citizens being isolated from the decisions taken by leaders". At the same time, in the large urban areas the necessity of discussing revival of the existing special cities status has also emerged. In Yokohama city, Osaka city and Nagoya city where the Urban Concept Research Society has been established, the creation of city-states with dual status as a region and urban area connecting the current system of designated cities to the new regional system has been proposed. Further to this, finance and industry and the government propose varying degrees of scale and structure of regions.

Future prospects for the Regional System

The introduction of the regional system would transform the nature of government. A central state, slimmed down by the transfer of competences of its regional offices to the regions, can then concentrate on the role of truly independent member of the international community through diplomacy, as globalisation progresses. In the midst of an increasingly fast-changing international environment, concentrating the role of the state on essential roles and leaving internal administration fundamentally to the regional and local authorities can be regarded as the true aim of the introduction of the regional system, which aims for construction of a society in which authority is devolved. The establishment of a system of regions has its most important meaning when considering these areas of reform. The main point of its introduction is that the regions will be in charge of domestic policies while entrusting services close to the citizens to the local authorities and are then able to deal with high level infrastructure improvement and economic development, ensuring the safety of the area and environment, making policies for large-scale disaster prevention and so forth. It becomes possible to react appropriately to the administrative demands flowing from the actual conditions of an area.

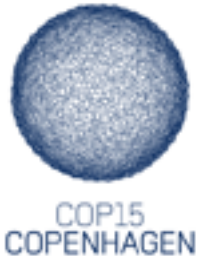
Looking at current trends of cooperation between prefectures, with the example such as the Kinki geographic area and the Kyushu geographic area, where the functions of the prefectures and branches of government have the possibility to be integrated, maybe implementation is gradual as the prime minister has already said "the regional system initiated by the geographic areas". From here on it is necessary to closely watch how the policies of the DPJ develop, but after the introduction of their pledges on regional sovereignty, it is probably not possible to ignore further demands for devolution, and in particular a wide-ranging reconsideration of the prefecture system in its current state.

Editorial

A Cold COP15 in Copenhagen

By Assistant Director Yoko Miyamoto

Translated by Keith Kelly



UNITED
NATIONS
CLIMATE
CHANGE
CONFERENCE
2009

I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to participate in the 15th United Nations Climate Change Conference which took place in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The Conference Itself

With the eyes of the world on the meeting, the whole of the city of Copenhagen was supporting it and it could be felt. For example if you went towards the Bella Centre which was the venue for the conference, you would hear the bus drivers saying "It would be great if it's a good conference"; you could see such things on restaurant menus as the recorded mileage of the food. Also, throughout the town in several plazas you there tents were erected where people could get lots of information about the projects of various world cities, as well as displays about the environment.

Organisational Issues

The second week of the conference in which I was in Copenhagen, the days of heavy snow were extremely cold. After arriving at the station nearest to the conference venue there were long queues. I wondered to myself whether this was natural for such an important international meeting and despite feeling relief halfway through queuing and seeing the end, we were kept waiting outside in below freezing conditions without any information about what was going on. The next day after waiting from six in the morning for five and a half hours I was able to get in. However on the last day as well as the day before people were being turned away. This was all apparently due to the fact that the amount of people that



turned up to be registered before entrance was far more than was expected and were able to get into the venue, as well as the computerised registration system going down meaning many people were turned away. Speakers were also turned away and some presentations had to be cancelled. As this was the case I only stayed at the conference for about a day and a half and wasn't able to attend all the presentations I had planned, but I was just about able to attend the ICLEI event.



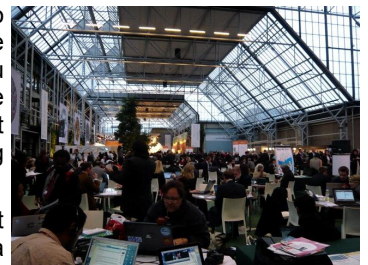
Local Authority related activities – Activities through ICLEI



ICLEI was set up in 1990 as an alliance of organizations such as local authorities and local government associations publicly committed to sustainable development. ICLEI had 1,200 people participate from local government, and at the Local Government Climate Lounge,

inside the venue, representatives from government were able to exchange their opinions and about to talk about the results of projects on the local area level. At the panel discussion made up of city mayors, on the importance of policies to cope with climate change throughout cities, the impression that was given was that "cities are not waiting for others to act". Also, personal displays of leadership and countermeasures against climate change as well as the postures of appeals from mayors to the world left a deep impression through impassioned speeches.

The ICLEI event was so successful with many people looking in from outside, you could really feel that there was great interest in what local authorities were doing in policy matters.



Finally, participants in next year's event asked for a warm welcome from Mr Ebrard, Mayor of Mexico City, host of next years COP16 so that people would not be left neglected out in the cold. With its inhabitants and business at the frontline it can be said that a city surely is at the forefront of countermeasures against the climate change. With this tendency it is to be expected that with COP in the future the role of cities will surely become more important.



Japan Local Government Centre

Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR), London

The Japan Local Government Centre is the UK office of CLAIR. CLAIR is a joint organisation of local authorities, working to promote and provide support for local internationalisation.

The main functions of JLGC, London are to conduct research on local government in the UK and northern Europe, and to promote exchanges between individuals, including government officers and local government representatives in the UK and Japan. We are also involved in implementing the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, which employs

UK graduates in the fields of international exchange and English language education in Japan.

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Issue 69
Editor: Keith Kelly