

**Speech of Dr. Tanaka Akihiko,  
President of the Japan International Cooperation  
Agency (JICA), delivered at the University of World  
Economy and Diplomacy (January 20, 2025)**

Your Excellency, Mr. Sodyq Safoev,

First Deputy Chairman of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis and  
Rector of the University of World Economy and Diplomacy,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to be conferred an honorary doctorate  
from the University of World Economy and Diplomacy.

I am privileged to be recognized by this esteemed center of  
study and education on world economy and diplomacy. As a  
long-time international relations student, this recognition is a  
great encouragement for me to continue my study of world  
affairs.

It is also a great pleasure to receive this honorary degree as  
President of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, as  
JICA has enjoyed its continuing work of cooperation with the  
government and the people of Uzbekistan.

It is also a humbling experience for me to have this honor  
because this degree conferment certainly reflects the  
significant appreciation of the people of Uzbekistan for many,  
many Japanese, young and old, who have worked hard to  
contribute to the friendship of the two nations.

Thanks to these Japanese and their Uzbek counterparts, the  
relationship between Uzbekistan and Japan is thriving. An  
increasing number of Japanese private companies are  
expanding their operations here. In addition to rich mineral  
resources, Uzbekistan offers opportunities for industry and  
commerce. Furthermore, Samarkand City and its beautiful  
architecture are widely admired by the Japanese and attract an  
increasing number of tourists from Japan.

In Japan, there is a growing number of Uzbekistan  
workers and students. The number of Uzbek students has  
grown 10fold in the last 20 years, making Uzbekistan one  
of the most rapidly increasing foreign student groups in  
Japanese higher education institutions.

For JICA, Uzbekistan has always been an important  
partner. Since Uzbekistan's independence in 1991, JICA  
has worked to solidify the growing ties between the two

countries. We have supported establishing the Uzbekistan-Japan Center for Human Resource Development and the Uzbek-Japanese Innovation Center of Youth. These institutions train human resources that strengthen ties between our countries and create a foundation for institutional academic-industrial collaboration.

Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV), whose management JICA is responsible for, have contributed to expanding the people-to-people network between Uzbekistan and Japan. Three hundred sixty-seven volunteers have been dispatched to this country, and 15 have been welcomed into this esteemed institution. Many have contributed to providing Japanese language education, tourism promotion, and health.

JICA has also made significant investments in infrastructure development. JICA-supported energy projects contributed 23% of Uzbekistan's total power generation capacity. With more than 4 billion USD in contributions to Uzbekistan, we are proud of our joint projects and their impact.

JICA is now implementing the "Project for Development of Industrial Human Resources in Uzbekistan by Utilizing Employment Opportunities in Japan." This project aims to promote decent work for migrant workers working in Japan by providing accurate information on working in Japan and improving networks of quality organizations that send or receive migrant workers. Uzbek and Japanese experts jointly created the "Japan Career Portal," which will be launched tomorrow.

So, the relationship between Uzbekistan and Japan is promising and expanding. Nevertheless, our relationship does not exist in a vacuum. It exists amid, probably, a once-in-a-century turmoil of international relations. If we are to promote this tremendous bilateral relationship, we need to have an appropriate understanding of the nature of the current world.

In my understanding, the most crucial feature of the current world is the compoundedness among the three systems: the global physical system, the global living system, and the global social system. Traditionally, we have long studied world affairs as phenomena of social systems, systems among human actors. International politics and diplomacy have been conceived of as interactions among sovereign states. The world economy

has been studied as a phenomenon in the global markets consisting of various social players: households, business firms, and governments.

However, to fully understand the 21 st-century world, analyzing social actors only within the framework of social systems is insufficient.

Climate change is not simply a physical system phenomenon. It is increasingly clear that the social system is causing climate change, which in turn has an excellent impact on the social system. Before industrialization, natural disasters had a one-sided impact on both the physical and social systems. Now, natural disasters may be caused by changes in social systems, and their ramifications have become issues in international negotiations.

The COVID-19 pandemic was not simply a phenomenon in the global biological system. The globalized transportation network, a creation of the international social system, tremendously accelerated its spread. It was a disaster caused by the interaction between the biological, living, and global social systems. We must create a better global health system to prevent the next pandemic, fully considering the complex interaction between the living and social systems.

Phenomena in the social system remain very important. Wars and conflicts kill many people. However, we should not forget that geopolitical calamities exist within the complex interaction between physical, living, and social systems.

The war in Ukraine has had extraordinary impacts on many countries. The rise in food prices worsened general inflation, which triggered the interest rate increase, exacerbating debt crises in several countries. Floods and droughts caused by climate change worsen political conditions and sometimes bring about conflicts.

Under these circumstances, the concept of human security becomes very important. National security is crucial as there is a real danger of inter-state wars and civil wars. However, individuals worldwide are now threatened by floods, wildfires, famines, infectious diseases, and economic downturns compounded by natural disasters. In many cases, a single country cannot cope with such crises.

Even the United States, the most powerful country in the world, is being helped by Canada and Mexico to cope with the disastrous wildfires in Los Angeles.

International cooperation is essential to preserving human security, freedom from fear and want, and freedom to human dignity. However, collaboration among traditional actors in global politics is not sufficient. We need multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary cooperation to mobilize many scientists and engineers from diverse areas of expertise because critical issues are interconnected among the physical, living, and social systems.

This multidisciplinary nature is becoming more apparent when we look at many issues on the global diplomatic agenda. Climate change and infectious diseases are prominent examples. Recently, diplomats have struggled with the regulation of artificial intelligence. AI is a phenomenon in the physical system created by social systems, which may become a social actor expected to help us but may endanger us, too. We need collaboration among diplomats, security specialists, computer scientists, and engineers to make appropriate regulations.

In 2008, JICA started a program called SATREPS: Science and Technology Research Partnership for Sustainable Development to realize collaboration among scientists and development practitioners. This scheme involves cooperation between scientists and engineers from Japan and its partner countries to develop innovative solutions to sustainable development issues.

Two SATREPS projects are ongoing in Uzbekistan. One involves developing innovative technologies to generate green and blue hydrogen efficiently, and the other aims to develop technologies to monitor and control water use efficiently in the Aral Sea region.

JICA's traditional projects have long emphasized the necessity of solving problems emerging in physical and living systems. Minister Kudratov and I signed the "Health Service Improvement Project" Loan agreement for 22,953 million yen this morning. This project is one of the examples that contributes to human security. It will provide urgently needed specialized health services and facilities in Uzbekistan.

Looking around the world, however, confrontation rather than cooperation appears prevalent. Power appears more

dominant than rules. Diplomats and security specialists should work hard to minimize the danger of such geopolitical confrontation.

This trend of the expanding sphere of power is not in the interest of countries like Uzbekistan and Japan, both non-military powers. Facing the challenges from such geopolitical confrontation and threats from the compounded crises, countries like Japan and Uzbekistan must try to preserve and expand the sphere of cooperation based on global rules. Uzbekistan and Japan are natural partners in arguing for the necessity of collaboration to protect human security from the threats caused by the compounded nature of today's crises. Based on the trust we have nurtured over the past decades, I am sure the two nations can play essential roles in preserving the sphere of cooperation despite the increasing geopolitical challenges.