

## Interview with the Chairman

## Needed Today: Improvements to Existing Frameworks and Mutual Understanding between Peoples

In 2009, the global financial crisis and ongoing recession left the world in a critical situation. We asked chairman Jiro Hanyu about project development in 2009 and the future direction of SPF.



**Jiro Hanyu**

Chairman

The Sasakawa Peace Foundation

**Q: What kind of environment did fiscal 2009 present for SPF?**

**Hanyu:** Ever since the late 1990s people have said at numerous points, “now we have entered a period of global transition,” but in fiscal 2009, with the financial crisis and global recession, the world seems to have turned a significant corner, and visions of the next era are starting to take shape. In that era, the world will be unable to maintain the international economic and social frameworks that were built in the late 20th century as they currently exist. Globalization based on free markets and deregulation has contributed to the economic development of developing countries, but has also widened the prosperity gap between the poorest nations of the world and the developed and emerging economies, creating instability in the international arena. It has also highlighted the vulnerabilities of the developed economies, as seen in the recent financial crisis.

Given these conditions, there is clearly a need for a kind of international cooperation that cannot be achieved through conventional frameworks among governments and industries. For a private non-profit foundation like SPF which strives to solve problems using creativity, unique civil-society strategies, and ideas that transcend the confines of conventional values, the goal must be to offer innovative proposals for improving existing international systems and structures, and to work to promote mutual understanding through interpersonal exchange.

**Q: What does SPF need to work toward next?**

**Hanyu:** The time has come to grapple directly with the positive and negative aspects of globalization, a challenge which we gave top priority in our fiscal 2008 Program Policy. In addition to promoting the project on issues involving demographic changes and population movement, we will carry out practical studies, hold discussions with prominent persons based on those studies, and invest several years in developing thorough policy proposals on the themes of globalization and the prosperity gap, as well as scientific and technological developments and society. In the area of personnel exchanges, particularly in Southeast Asia where our projects have already achieved diverse results, we will focus on human resource development in the late-developing ASEAN countries like Myanmar and Cambodia.

We designated the US and the Middle East as priority regions in our fiscal 2008 Program Policy. Since then, we have been working with the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in the US to develop multilayered projects, including the expansion of exchange programs focused on political and economic issues. For projects on the Middle East, we plan to keep expanding our Arabic-language website about Japan, which was launched last year, and to hold seminars and symposia to promote mutual understanding between SPF and think tanks in Iran and Egypt.

**Q: What is most required of SPF in the future?**

**Hanyu:** In the current climate of instability, we are keenly aware, as is noted in our Program Policy, that SPF, which promotes international interaction and cooperation led by the private nonprofit sector, has a profound potential to advance creative solutions to international problems through cooperation with various organizations in Japan and around the world. We are doing our utmost to develop the new projects needed to fulfill that potential.

We appreciate your ongoing cooperation and support for all of our future activities.