

2015 New Year's Greeting by Mr. Hiromi Tagawa, Chairman of JATA

At the Dawn of the 40 Million Travelers Two-way Tourism Era Promoting the Globalization of Travel

Japan Association of Travel Agents

Best wishes for a prosperous 2015!

Fifteen years into the 21st century, I feel that the time has come when we can say that a new century of peace has begun. Despite threats like the Ebola virus disease and the insurrection of the Islamic State, data collected by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) shows that the number of international visitor arrivals in 2014 is likely to exceed the outlook and reach 1.1 billion for the first time in history. Asia is expected to record a 5% growth following the 8% growth of the two American continents.

After the Lower House elections in Japan, the country is set to continue the implementation of the economic policy determined by the previous government. 2015 will be marked with nationwide local elections. The travel and tourism industry is expected to play a paramount role in the invigoration and development of local areas, which is one of the government's premier platforms. Relaxation of visa policies and procedures, devaluation of the yen and governmental policies have created a favorable environment for the realization of the 20-million-inbound-travelers goal even before the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Furthermore, the relations between Japan and its two neighbors China and South Korea have begun to improve, which further strengthens our confidence that 2015 will provide strong tailwinds for the travel industry. However, at the point of exceeding the 30-million out- and inbound travelers mark, the problems of the tourist infrastructure in Japan will come to the fore. While preparing a strategic response, we will be moving towards the era of 40 million travelers and 2015 is the year when we can create a long-term vision of Japan as a world tourism power. Thus, 2015 is the first year of the 40-Million Two-way Tourism era.

Inbound tourism can also contribute to the globalization of Japanese tourism. During the 50 years since the liberalization of the overseas travel, the Japan Association of Travel Agents (JATA) has been contributing to the internationalization of Japanese

people by expanding overseas travel. Based on its experience of the last 50 years, while playing a role in the globalization of Japanese tourism, JATA needs to further globalize its activities. We are strongly aware that JATA is the sole organization which can take and complete the task of globalizing Japanese tourism. To strengthen its presence on the global stage JATA will continue to work closely with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), and other world organizations. At the same time, we believe that our community-based activities are necessary for the revitalization of Japan's regions and will therefore make even greater efforts to work closely with our regional offices.

Also, with regards to the concept of the travel industry system discussed by the Travel Industry Study Group of the Japan Tourism Agency, 2015 is the year when the travel agency law, legal terms and conditions as well as detailed policies for the future development of the travel and tourism industry should be determined while taking into account the fast-advancing globalization.

As regards JATA's activities, many of them have been planned for completion in 2016. However, the projects which can be sped up, will be completed in 2015 and in 2016 we will be working to create a tourism-based culture and values while simultaneously setting new tasks and goals for the historical 2020.

JATA Tourism EXPO Japan, which is considered a symbolic event of the Japan Association of Travel Agents, will be held for a second time after it made a fresh start last year. It is an important venue where the travel and tourism industry shows its power potential. We will work hard to prove again that Tourism EXPO Japan is a unique comprehensive event of beneficial effects and great significance in both BtoB and BtoC aspects.

With the closing of the 2016 Olympic Games in Brazil the spotlight will shift from Rio de Janeiro to Tokyo, the host of the following Olympics. 2015, being the preceding year of the attention shift, is the year when we must determine the grand design of Japan's promotion strategy for 2020. This responsibility, however, is not exclusive to the travel industry. It is a task which requires the efforts of all industries and fields of work and which will help them make an important transition. That is why it is important to decide what the transition will be and where it will take us.

I am looking forward to your continued guidance and warm support.

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