

New Year's Greeting by JATA Chairperson Nobuaki Sakamaki Re-energizing Japan and the world through the power of travel

At the beginning of 2021, I would like to express my sincere greetings for the New Year.

A year ago, in 2019, the number of foreign visitors to Japan and the number of Japanese overseas tourists both reached record highs. The New Coronavirus spread around the world when the public and private sectors were working together to promote international exchange and achieve further growth in Japanese tourism. Travel and tourism stopped, the world changed completely in a blink of the eye. JATA asked the government to "support the industry's survival, help to ease the nation's self-restraint, and implement measures for the recovery of large-scale demand." This request led to some first-ever special measures and an extension of employment adjustment subsidies, implementation of Go To Travel Campaign, and other initiatives. In addition, we held the "Tourism EXPO Japan in Okinawa" while implementing all possible measures against infection spread during the event. As a result, JATA achieved zero infections during the expo.

Tourism supports the world's employment and economy, promotes mutual understanding and creates a culture of tolerance among people regardless of national borders. The coronavirus crisis reaffirmed this indispensable role of our industry. To fulfill this role, we must continue to develop sustainable tourism and enrich people's hearts and lives.

The year 2021 will be a major turning point for the travel industry. Instead of making the Go To Travel Campaign a temporary economic measure, we must consider the next step that will lead to the development of the travel industry. In addition, in order to resume international exchange, we need to develop and introduce both inbound and outbound strategies. Furthermore, JATA must fulfill its leadership role by taking a step forward.

The Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be held this summer. People from more than 200 countries and regions will visit Japan. The Olympics are a big sporting event but much more than that, this year's games will be the turning point for our whole industry to trigger the resumption of international travel exchange. It is important, however, that the travelers should work with the travel companies so that we can all together build and establish a "new style of travel" which will ensure the safety and security of both the customers and the travel and tourism industry employees.

Then, we can once again polish the planning and product-presentation skills which the travel and tourism industry professionals have acquired and developed over decades of hard work. Let's do our best and take this path together and, through collaboration and partnership, create products with new added value the power of travel.

We look forward to your continued guidance and support this year as well.

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