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Message

Itsuro Terada
Chief Justice of the Supreme Court

It is my honour to have been appointed to the office of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. My sincerest efforts will be devoted to taking on the weighty responsibilities of this office.

Nearly 70 years have passed since the end of the war, and during this period, we the judiciary of Japan, have striven to fulfill our mission to protect the rights of the people and to maintain the legal order that forms the basis of our society, by working to find an appropriate and valid solution to each case brought before the courts, supported by the understanding and cooperation of the public. However, as we see conflicts of interest becoming more complicated and often aggravated due to changes in socioeconomic conditions and various other factors, I cannot help but notice that what is being asked of the courts is becoming much deeper and broader. We must also not overlook the ever-increasing speed at which society moves. Given this, the courts will have to faithfully strive harder than ever before to find a suitable, valid and prompt solution to each and every case.

Within the framework of the set of justice system reforms that have been progressing thus far in response to the demands of the times, various new systems have been introduced and put into operation. Among these, we will soon mark the fifth year since the introduction of the *saiban-in* (lay judge) system. Many who have served as *saiban-in* have rated the experience as highly valuable, and I feel it safe to say that we have been discharging the duty to operate the system smoothly through the cooperation of the people. However, there are still many challenges that we need to tackle in the push for this historically-significant system to become firmly rooted in society. Family affairs and international issues are now more commonly seen to come within the range of the courts than before; the legislation related to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, which takes effect today, represents such a trend. I would say that in order to enhance and strengthen the function of the judiciary while responding to situations such as these, the courts are called upon to deepen their consideration with an eye not only to the domestic climate but also to the global tide, and to work tirelessly to fulfill the public's expectations and prove themselves worthy of the people's trust.

Even after more than three years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake and the accidents at the nuclear power plants triggered by this disaster, these events still continue to have a great impact on the lives of many, in particular, in the affected areas. The judiciary will continue to make every possible effort to help people in these areas restore stable living and reconstruct their communities.

Upon assuming office as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, I am ready to devote my full efforts to the performance of my duties, while maintaining the foundation that has been built thus far and aiming to increase public and social trust in the judiciary.

I ask for your continued understanding and cooperation with the activities of the courts.