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Message

Naoto Otani

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court

It is my honor to have been appointed to the office of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Japan.

Over 70 years have passed since a new court system commenced in parallel with the enforcement of the Constitution of Japan. By working to find an appropriate and valid solution to each legal case put before them, the courts have striven to fulfill their mission to protect the rights of the people and to maintain the legal order.

Looking back on the road traveled up to this point, we have experienced changes in the socioeconomic structure, which have made people's interests more complicated and have accelerated the diversification of personal values. Along with the rapid development of science and technology, especially of information and communication technology, and the progress of globalization, disputes brought before the courts now often include aggravated conflicts or take the form of a new type conflict, and receive a great deal of public attention. The role of the courts is becoming increasingly important, and the courts are being asked to conduct proceedings and make determinations in a high-quality manner.

Efforts for Justice System Reforms that started in 1999 achieved the establishment and fundamental reforms of various systems, including introduction of the *saiban-in* (lay judge) system in criminal procedures. After these achievements, system reforms that significantly affect trial procedures and even the daily lives of citizens, such as the revision of the Civil Code and the legislation related to developing a criminal justice system for a new era, are still ongoing. The courts need to ensure that these reformed systems will operate smoothly. In addition, there is a growing need to broaden our scope to include the judiciary trends in international society. Furthermore, we should not drag our feet in considering how to modernize trial procedures through

the use of information and communication technology.

Facing these various tasks, upon assuming the office of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, I keenly feel anew the weight of the responsibilities assigned to this office. I am ready to devote my full efforts to realize the ideal of a court system that closely serves the needs of the public and is relied upon by the public, and that eventually bolsters the integrity and stability of the rule of law, by observing and developing the fine tradition of the judiciary that has been built up thus far.

I would like to ask for your continued understanding of and cooperation with the judiciary.