

YOHEI SASAKAWA

Chairman of The Nippon Foundation

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Yohei Sasakawa, born in Tokyo on January 8, 1939, is Chairman of The Nippon Foundation, a private, non-profit foundation established in 1962 for the purpose of carrying out philanthropic activities, using revenue from motorboat racing.

After 20 years in the business sector, Sasakawa joined The Nippon Foundation in 1981.-Sasakawa is known for bringing an entrepreneurial spirit to his work with entities from the political, governmental, academic, and private sectors in addressing issues in such diverse areas as health, education, food security, and maritime safety.

His global fight against leprosy and its accompanying stigma and social discrimination is an issue to which he has remained highly committed for more than 40 years.

Professional Experience

2005 - Present Chairman, The Nippon Foundation

1989 - 2005 President, The Nippon Foundation

1988 - 1989 Acting President, The Nippon Foundation

1981 - 1988 Trustee, The Nippon Foundation

Official Appointments

Special Envoy of the Government of Japan for National Reconciliation in Myanmar [2013 - Present]

Goodwill Ambassador for the Welfare of the National Races in Myanmar

(Appointed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan) [2012 - Present]

Goodwill Ambassador for the Human Rights of Persons Affected by Leprosy

(Appointed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan) [2007 - Present]

World Health Organization Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination [2001 - Present]

As of July 2019

Initiatives taken by Yohei Sasakawa

●2018

Announced the launch of the CHANGE FOR THE BLUE project as a new, large-scale, nationwide initiative bringing together multiple stakeholders including private-sector entities, the government, and academic institutions to find and implement practical programs to address the problem of marine debris.

Launched the 13th Global Appeal to end stigma and discrimination against persons affected by leprosy, endorsed by Disabled Peoples' International, from New Delhi, India.

Held the National Leprosy Conference in Myanmar, attended by State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, calling for an end to discrimination against persons affected by leprosy.

Signed the Myanmar Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) between the Myanmar Government and two ethnic armed organizations as a witness and in the capacity of Special Envoy of the Government of Japan. As with the NCA signed in 2015, Japan was the only non-adjacent country invited to this signing ceremony and pledged continued support for the peace process.

Held a ceremony to mark the completion of 460 schools built in cooperation with the Government of Myanmar. Begun in 2002, the school construction program in Myanmar has built 300 schools in Shan State, 100 schools in Rakhine State, and 60 schools in Ayeyarwady Region.

Held the True Colours Festival, an arts festival featuring performances by artists with disabilities from 18 countries, in Singapore.

Opened The Nippon Foundation Para Arena, a dedicated para sports gymnasium in Odaiba, Tokyo, that will provide a training environment for athletes aiming to compete in the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

Held the first international conference in Asia dealing with human rights issues faced by persons with albinism, focusing on sub-Saharan Africa, in close collaboration with the United Nations Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism.

●2017

At a plenary meeting of the United Nations Ocean Conference, proposed that the United Nations establish an intergovernmental panel for comprehensive ocean governance.

Together with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), launched Global Appeal 2017, for the elimination of stigma and discrimination against persons affected by leprosy, from New Delhi, India.

Held a ceremony to mark the completion of buildings for conflict-affected people in southeast Myanmar as the part of the First Rehabilitation Programme, started in March 2016. Based on a further request from the Myanmar side, started the Second Rehabilitation Programme, which includes construction of houses, schools, health care centers and wells, in Kayin State and Mon State with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Signed a partnership agreement with the Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games for cooperation and coordination in the area of volunteer activities for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

●2016

Jointly organized the International Symposium on Leprosy and Human Rights in the Vatican with the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers and the Good Samaritan Foundation. The Symposium adopted and approved Conclusion and Recommendations calling for an end to stigma and discrimination against persons affected by leprosy.

Established The Nippon Foundation Ocean Innovation Consortium, a nationwide initiative that engages the industrial, academic, public, and private sectors with the aim of building human capacity in offshore development.

Completed a distribution program to provide food and humanitarian assistance in conflict-affected areas in Myanmar, reaching a total of approximately 500,000 people over five years.

Launched the Rehabilitation Program, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and with the agreement of the Government of Myanmar, to build houses, schools, health clinics and other facilities for conflict-affected people in Myanmar. The program covers the region under the influence of the ethnic armed organizations that signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in 2015.

Launched the Seabed 2030, an initiative to map the world's ocean floor by the year 2030.

The Japan-China Sasakawa Medical Fellowship, established to promote mutual understanding and friendship between China and Japan in medicine and health care in 1987, marked its 30th anniversary and saw the number of fellows reach approximately 2,200.

●2015

Launched the Maritime Safety and Security Policy Program (MSP), one of the few programs to offer a master's degree in this field. This joint effort with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS), and the Japan Coast Guard nurtures specialists in the field of maritime safety and security in Asia.

Established The Nippon Foundation Paralympic Support Center to strengthen the functions of national Para sports federations and to raise public awareness of paralympic movements, toward the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games and beyond.

Led the Japanese government delegation of election observers in the Myanmar General Election. Confirmed that the elections were held in a fair manner as a significant first step towards progress in democratization.

Signed the Myanmar Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement between the Myanmar Government and eight ethnic armed organizations as a witness and in the capacity of Special Envoy of the Government of Japan. Japan was the only non-adjacent country invited to this Signing Ceremony and pledged continued support for the peace process.

●2014

The number of Sasakawa Fellows from the International Maritime University (IMU) and the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) combined passed the 1,000 mark.

●2013

Appointed as Special Envoy of the Government of Japan for National Reconciliation in Myanmar. Assisted in promoting dialogue between the Government of Myanmar and ethnic armed organizations at their request.

●2012

Led the distribution of USD 3 million of food and medicine to conflict-affected people in inaccessible areas of Myanmar under the influence of ethnic armed organizations.

Initiated a series of regional international symposia on leprosy and human rights to raise awareness and enhance implementation of the UN resolution and accompanying Principles and Guidelines on elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members. The first symposium was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Subsequent symposia were held in New Delhi (2012), in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (2013), in Rabat, Morocco (2014) and concluded with the final symposium in Geneva (2015) incorporating a research report and recommendations by an International Working Group.

●2011

Conducted various relief work projects in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami including distribution of emergency aid supplies, support for nearly 700 volunteer groups working in affected areas, and a symposium where world-leading experts on radiation and health discussed the health risks for people in Fukushima. These initiatives were funded by both domestic and overseas public donations.

Initiated the Tokyo-Washington Dialog to develop bilateral policy proposals

●2010

Assisted the Japanese government in submitting a resolution on “elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members” together with accompanying “Principles and Guidelines” to the UN Human Rights Council. The resolution was subsequently adopted by the UN General Assembly.

Established schools of prosthetics and orthotics in Indonesia and the Philippines

●2009

Launched ASEAN Secretariat - The Nippon Foundation Project on Leprosy and Human Dignity

●2008

As the Japanese Government's Goodwill Ambassador for the Human Rights of Persons Affected by Leprosy, assisted the Japanese government in submitting to the UN Human Rights Council a draft resolution on "elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members" by the UN Human Rights Council.

●2007

Established the Aids to Navigation Fund, a new initiative for the protection of the Malacca-Singapore Straits

●2006

Established the Sasakawa-India Leprosy Foundation in New Delhi

Launched the Global Appeal to End Stigma and Discrimination against Persons Affected by Leprosy

●2004

Launched the Traditional Medicine Project in Mongolia

●2000

Initiated The Nippon Foundation Fellowships for Asian Public Intellectuals (API Fellowships) in five countries in Asia

●1999

Established an international network of maritime universities

Provided pediatric medical assistance to victims of the Chernobyl Disaster

●1993

Chaired an international joint research program to develop an Arctic shipping route

●1987

Established the Sasakawa Medical Scholarship Program to train 2000 medical doctors from the People's Republic of China.

Created the Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund (SYLFF), a grant-in-aid program that has resulted in a network linking 69 major universities worldwide

●1986

Initiated the Sasakawa Global 2000 Program to enable African nations to achieve self-sufficiency in staple crop production

Honors

- 2019 Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun, Japan
- 2019 Gandhi Peace Prize (Awarded in 2018)
- 2018 Honorary Citizenship of the Republic of Palau
- 2018 The Royal Order of Monisaraphon Knight Grand Cross, Cambodia
- 2017 Ocean's 8 Award, The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO
- 2017 Health and Human Rights Award, International Council of Nurses
- 2017 Plus ratio quam vis Medal, Jagiellonian University
- 2017 Health-for-All Gold Medal, World Health Organization
- 2016 The Award of Distinction of the President of Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
- 2015 International Maritime Prize (Awarded in 2014)
- 2014 The Rule of Law Award, International Bar Association
- 2013 Gold Medal of Merit, Republic of Serbia
- 2013 Friendship Medal of the State of Vietnam, The Socialist Republic of Vietnam
- 2011 Royal Order of Sahametrei class Maha Sirivudha (Grand Cross), Cambodia
- 2011 Commander of the Medal of Gratitude Central Africa
- 2010 Commander of the Order of the Defender of the Realm (Panglima Mangku Negara)
Tan Sri, Malaysia
- 2010 Commander of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit
- 2010 Ethiopian Millennium Gold Medal
- 2010 Royal Order of the Polar Star-Commander First Class, Kingdom of Sweden
- 2010 Ordem de Timor-Leste, Timor-Leste
- 2010 The Grand Cross of the Order of the Falcon with Star, Republic of Iceland
- 2010 Order of the Knight of Dannebrog, Kingdom of Denmark
- 2010 Dr. Norman E. Borlaug Medallion of the World Food Prize
- 2010 Commander of the Order of the White Rose of Finland
- 2010 The Patriarch's Chart of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill
- 2010 The Diploma of Honorary Academician of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences
- 2009 'Science for Society' Award, Hungarian Academy of Sciences
- 2007 International Gandhi Award (Awarded in 2006)
- 2007 Polestar Order, Mongolia
- 2007 Coast Guard Legion of Honor (Degree of Maginoo)
- 2006 Commandeur de l'Ordre National du Mali à titre Étranger
- 2004 Yomiuri International Cooperation Prize, Japan
- 2003 Commandeur de l'Ordre Royal du Monisaraphon, Cambodia
- 2003 National Construction Medal, Cambodia
- 2003 Officier de l'Ordre National, Government of Madagascar

- 2003 The Special Award, World Maritime University, Sweden
- 2001 Vaclav Havel Memorial Medal, Czech President Vaclav Havel
- 2001 Millennium Gandhi Award, International Leprosy Union
- 2000 Order of Merit in the rank of Grand Officer, Government of Romania
- 2000 International Green Pen Awards honour for Pacific Environmental Journalism, Fiji
- 2000 Decerne la Medaille d'Honneur de Menerbes, France
- 1998 Al Hussein Bin Ali Decoration for Accomplishment-First Degree, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
- 1998 Health-for-All Gold Medal, World Health Organization
- 1997 China Health Medal, Republic of China
- 1996 Frantsiska Scarina Medal, People's Republic of Belarus
- 1996 Medal for Merits Third Degree, Ukraine
- 1996 Kin Inka Sho, Republic of Peru
- 1996 Order of Friendship, Russian Federation
- 1996 Order of Merit for Distinguished Service-Third Grade, Republic of Peru
- 1995 La Grande Étoile de Djibouti, Republic of Djibouti
- 1989 Grand Officier de L'Ordre du Mono, Republic of Togo

Honorary Degrees

- 2018 Honorary Doctor, Institute of Engineering and Technology, Mongolia
- 2018 Advisory Professor, Jilin University, China
- 2017 Doctor of Laws, University of Minnesota, USA
- 2016 Doctor Honoris Causa, Sofia University, Bulgaria
- 2013 Honorary Degree of Doctor of the University, University of York, The United Kingdom
- 2012 Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humanities, University of Malaya, Malaysia
- 2012 Honorary Degree of Doctor of Agricultural Development Honoris Causa, Hawassa University
- 2009 Honorary Professorship, Yunnan University, China
- 2008 Honorary Degree of Doctor in Humane Letters, University for Peace
- 2008 Honorary Professorship, Dalian University of Foreign Language, China
- 2007 Honorary Doctor of Humanity, University of Cambodia, Cambodia
- 2007 Honorary Professorship, Guizhou University, China
- 2007 Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters, Rochester Institute of Technology, USA
- 2006 Honorary Professorship, Dalian Maritime University, China
- 2005 Doctor Honoris Causa, Jadavpur University, India

- 2005 Honorary Chair, International Association of Maritime Universities
- 2004 Honorary Professorship, Shanghai Maritime University, China
- 2004 Doctor Honoris Causa, World Maritime University, Sweden
- 2004 Honorary Professorship, Heilongjiang University, China
- 2004 Honorary Professorship, Harbin Medical University, China
- 2003 Honorary Professorship, China Medical University, China
- 2003 Doctor Honoris Causa, Academy of Management, Mongolia
- 2000 Honorary Professorship, Yanbian University, China
- 2000 Doctor Honoris Causa, University of Bucharest, Romania
- 2000 Doctor Honoris Causa, University of Cape Coast, Ghana

Major Publications

- 2019 No Matter Where the Journey Takes Me: One Man's Quest for a Leprosy-Free World, C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd, London
- 2019 My Struggle against Leprosy, Festina Lente Japan, Tokyo
- 2016 Aisuru Sokoku e (To My Beloved Motherland), Sankei Shimbun Publications Inc., Tokyo
- 2015 *Shinshi no hinkaku 2* (A Gentleman's Dignity 2), PHP Publishing, Tokyo
- 2014 *Zanshin, Sekai no hansen-byo wo seiatsu suru* (Remaining Mindful, Eliminating Leprosy Worldwide)
- 2012 *Shinshi no hinkaku* (A Gentleman's Dignity), PHP Publishing, Tokyo
- 2010 *Rin-jin, chugoku-jin ni itte okitai koto* (Things I Would Like to Say to Our Neighbors, the Chinese), PHP Publishing, Tokyo
- 2010 *Soredemo tabako wo suimasu ka?* (And You Still Smoke?) Gentosha, Inc. Tokyo
- 2010 *Fukano wo kano ni ? Sekai no hansen byo tononataakai* (Making the Impossible Possible; The World's Battle with Leprosy), Akashi Shoten, Tokyo
- 2009 *Wakamono yo, sekai ni habatake* (Youth! Get Out and See the World!) PHP Publishing, Tokyo
- 2008 *Ningen toshite ikite hoshii kara* (Because They Should be Able to Live as Human Beings, Too), Kairyusha Co.Ltd., Tokyo
- 2004 *Sekai no hansen-byo ga nakunaru hi* (The Day Leprosy Is Eradicated from the World), Akashi Shoten, Tokyo
- 2004 *Konokuni anokuni* (This Country and That Country), Sankei Shimbun-sha, Tokyo
- 1998 *Gaimusho no shiranai sekai no sugao* (Real Faces of the World Unknown to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Sankei Shimbun-sha, Tokyo
- 1996 *Chie aru mono wa chie de tsumazuku* (Those with Wisdom Fail for Wisdom), Crest Publishing House, Tokyo