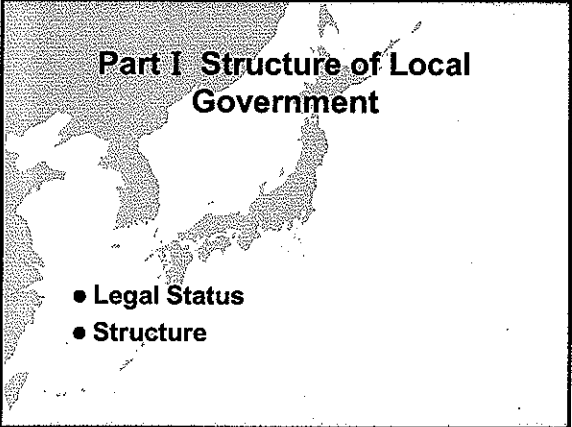




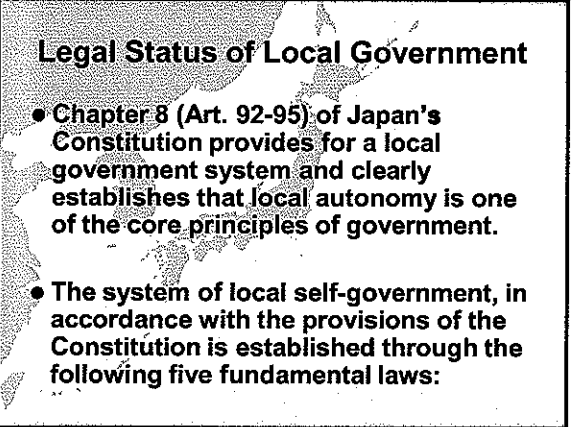
**The role of councillors
in Japan**

26 July 2010
Irmelind Kirchner
Japan Local Government Centre



**Part I Structure of Local
Government**

- Legal Status
- Structure



Legal Status of Local Government

- Chapter 8 (Art. 92-95) of Japan's Constitution provides for a local government system and clearly establishes that local autonomy is one of the core principles of government.
- The system of local self-government, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution is established through the following five fundamental laws:

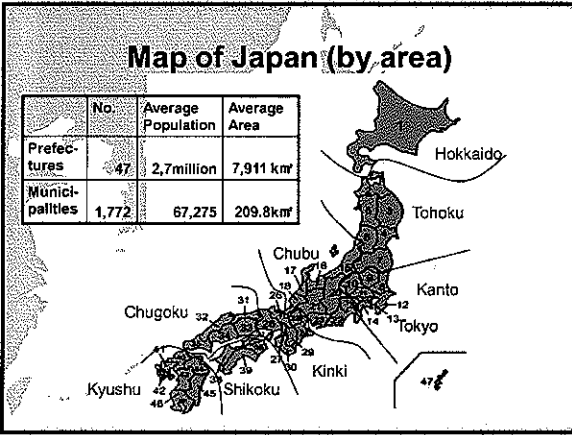
Local Autonomy Law
 - Basic Provisions, Internal Organisation, and Management

Local Public Service Law
 - Local Public Service Personnel


Local Finance Law
 - Local Finance

Local Tax Law
 - Local Tax


Public Officials Election Law
 - Election of Public Officials




Government Buildings



City Hall - Kagoshima City



Prefectural Office - Fukushima Prefecture



Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

Part II
Elections and the Role of Councillors

- Election system
- Internal structure of a local authority
- Status of councillors
- Role of councillors

Elections

- Central Government (4 year cycle); (Parliamentary Cabinet System)
- Local Government (4 year cycle); dual system of representative democracy

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graph BT; Citizens[Citizens] -- Election --> Governor[Governor or Mayor]; Citizens -- Election --> Assembly[Assembly];
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Electoral System

- Election of the whole council
- In principle, local elections at the same time across the country (however in recent years due to resignations/ dissolution of the council/ mergers true 'unified local elections' have become rare)
- Personalised elections (not according to party lists) by name; candidates are ranked in order of votes received until the specified number of seats is filled

Voting and standing for elections

- **Voting rights:** Japanese citizen, 20 years of age; resident in the locality for a minimum of 3 months; on the electoral register
- **Standing for elections:** Japanese citizen; 25 years of age

The Japanese councillor: restrictions and specifics

- **Councillors may not at the same time hold multiple elected office in different authorities (including at national level)**
- **Councillors cannot be employed by a local authority or in any position that can come into conflict with their role as councillor**
- **Candidates have to resign from such work before standing for election**

Councillors cont.

- **Being a councillor is regarded as a full-time job - council meetings are held during the day**
- **Regular council sessions at prefectural level go on for several days**
- **Councillors are remunerated - levels of pay are decided by each local authority (prefectures: £7,200 to 4,800/month; cities: £7,500 to 2,400/month)**

Role of Councils

- Approve or reject the budget (prepared by the Mayor or Governor)
- Decide on bylaws and regulations
- Scrutinise the executive – rights of inquiry, demand for information and reports, call officers and citizens for testimony
- Vote for chair and decide on committee membership

Current issues

- Is the power balance between councillors and Governor/Mayor right?
- Are councillors too highly paid? (efforts to reduce remuneration ongoing in many cities)
- Are volunteer councillors a better way?
- How should councillors connect with citizens and voters?
