

**Speech by H.E. Mr. Masahiro Omura, Ambassador of Japan, at the Send-off
Ceremony for Pacific LEADS Programme Participants**

Friday 11 August 2017

Honourable Dr. Jiko Luveni, Speaker of Parliament,

Mr. Yogesh Karan, Permanent Secretary for Prime Minister's Office and
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Acting),

Ms. Alison Burchell, Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Youth and Sports,

Mr. Sakeasi Waikere, Deputy Secretary, International Cooperation and
Corporate Services, Office of the Prime Minister,

Mr. Sanaila Naqali, Deputy Secretary for Ministry of Fisheries,

Representatives of High Commissions of Kiribati, Tuvalu and Vanuatu,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bula Vinaka, Kam-Na-Mauri, Talofa, Good Afternoon and Konnichiwa.

I warmly welcome you all to my residence. I have newly started my term as the Ambassador of Japan to Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. You all are my honoured guests in the first reception that I am hosting here. Thank you for joining us at the occasion of the sending off reception of Pacific LEADS participants. I would like to congratulate all the programme participants including 16 from Fiji, 5 from Kiribati, 1 from Tuvalu and 3 from Vanuatu. I also would like to acknowledge the kind understanding and cooperation towards this programme by respective governments and ministries.

Pacific LEADS Programme was announced by Prime Minister Abe at the PALM7 in 2015. It is a programme to support education of young leaders of Pacific Island Countries. In this programme, selected government officials of

Pacific Island Countries are accepted as overseas students, obtain Masters Degrees in Japanese Universities and undergo on the job training at central government agencies or local governments.

Last year, approximately forty people participated as the first batch of this programme. This year, as a second batch, 16 people from Fiji, 5 from Kiribati, 1 from Tuvalu and 3 from Vanuatu are participating.

I hope all of you will acquire specialized knowledge necessary for resolution of development challenges of Pacific Island Countries. We also hope that you will contribute deepening of relationship with Japan as persons who know Japan well. I wish health and good luck for all you participants for your stay in Japan. We plan to dispatch the third batch next year. The JICA Fiji office will communicate to the Pacific Island Countries regarding specific procedure to select participants. We would like to request continuous kind support from respective governments and ministries. We look forward to the successful completion of your studies in Japan and to your contribution towards the development of your respective countries in the future.

I also would like to take this opportunity to wish all the best to Honourable Speaker for her successful trip to Japan next week.

Vinaka Vakalevu, Ko Rabwa, Fakafetai, Tank-You-Tumas, Thank You and Arigato Gozaimasu.