

**Speech by H.E Masahiro Omura, Ambassador of Japan to Fiji, Embassy  
of Japan, at the Handing Over Ceremony for, “The Project for  
Construction of Ba Women’s Forum Training Centre”**

Thursday, 15 February 2018, 12:00 pm, at the Ba Women’s Training Centre

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The Honourable Rear Admiral (Retired) Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama,  
Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji;

Honourable Mereseini Vuniwaqa, Minister for Women, Children and  
Poverty Alleviation;

Honourable Praveen Kumar Bala, Minister for Local Government,  
Housing and Environment, Infrastructure and Transport;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Dr. Maria Doton, President of Ba Women’s Forum,

Members of Ba Women’s Forum,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon, Cola Vina, Namaste, Assalaam-Alaikum and  
Konnichiwa.

I wish to thank you all for the warm Ba hospitality.

On behalf of the government and people of Japan, it is my honour to hand over this new training centre to the Ba Women's Forum today.

This two-story training centre is equipped with state of the art sewing room, kitchen, two additional training rooms and a hall.

I am pleased to say that the Government of Japan has provided funding worth Four Hundred Ninety Three Thousand Fiji Dollars (FJ\$492,900) for this project, which is implemented through its Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects Programme, or GGP in short.

Ladies and Gentlemen, women are the standard bearers of every society. Apart from enriching our lives by being our mothers, sisters, wives and daughters they are also resourceful economic agents. They contribute to the income of families and the growth of communities in a multitude of ways. They work as entrepreneurs, agricultural and industrial labourers, and are also self-employed. In doing so, they take on a major share of unpaid work at home compared to their male counterparts. Furthermore, their contribution is often limited by unequal access to resources, persistent discrimination and gender norms which hinders them from realising their full potential.

The Ba Women's Forum endeavours to overcome such obstacles

through its programs and activities. It has made exceptional strides since its inception in 2011 to improve the livelihoods of women in Ba but the lack of its own training facility has hindered its existing training capabilities as well as its expansion into other training areas.

Today, I am delighted to see that such difficulties will be addressed through the new training centre. This new facility will promote women's participation in economic activities and enrich vocational training. It will further contribute towards making the Ba Women's Forum a leading women's organization and this initiative a model project for the rest the country.

After being re-elected and forming the new Government of Japan, the first international conference hosted by the Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe was the World Assembly for Women (WAW!), in November 2017. This was the fourth time this meeting was hosted by Japan, which was attended by women leaders and activists from all over the world, including Ms Ivanka Trump, daughter and advisor of US President Donald Trump.

In this meeting, Prime Minister Abe announced that only a decade ago the percentage of women in Japanese workforce was far lower than that of the US, but based on Government of Japan's women empowerment policies, this percentage has now equaled the US. He

stated that if Japan can change, it is also possible to change the world. During this occasion, the Prime Minister Abe also pledged US\$50 million for the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative launched earlier in 2017.

May I also take this opportunity to applaud the strong leadership of Fijian Government led by the Honourable Prime Minister, Bainimarama. During such time, Fiji has, for the first time in its history achieved eight consecutive years of economic growth. The Honourable Prime Minister, in his 2018 New Year's Message to the nation has stated the women's programs and initiatives are a key part of Fijian Government's agenda for development and economic growth.

This gives me immense happiness, as this project not only stands to deliver on its objectives but is also in line with Fiji's National Development Plan. Such harmonization is crucial to Japan's development cooperation with Fiji.

At this juncture, I would like to highlight that since 1990, Japan has provided assistance to Fiji through 359 GGP projects, with the total value being approximately US\$ 24 million. I wish to reassure you of Japan's commitment on providing continued assistance for Fiji's development.

I extend my appreciation to all the stakeholders for the cooperation given to us, in order to make this project a reality. This training centre will be a source of hope and inspiration to the women of Fiji, especially at the grassroots level. It will also provide the women of Ba, practical means to empower themselves, gain financial independence and above all, lead better lives.

I conclude with confidence that this project will further strengthen the friendship between the people and governments of Japan and Fiji.

Thank You, Vinaka Vakalevu, Dhanyavaadh, Shukriya and Arigatō Gozaimasu.

**The End.**