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**Speech by H.E. Mr. Takuji Hanatani, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Kiribati,  
on the Occasion of the Inauguration Ceremony for the Project for the Expansion of Betio  
Port, at 3pm, on 1 July 2014, Republic of Kiribati**  
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*President of the Republic of Kiribati and Minister of Foreign  
Affairs and Immigration, H.E. Mr. Anote Tong,*

*Vice President and Minister of Internal Affairs, the Hon. Ms.  
Teima Onorio,*

*Minister of Communication, Transport and Tourism Development,  
Hon. Mr. Rimeta Beniamina,*

*Honourable Ministers of the Government of the Republic of  
Kiribati,*

*Honourable Members of Parliament,*

*Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Representatives  
of International & Regional Organizations,*

*Distinguished Guests,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Good Afternoon and Mauri.

On behalf of the people and the Government of Japan this afternoon, it is my honour to participate in the Inauguration Ceremony of the Project for the Expansion of Betio Port. I would also like to convey my appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Kiribati for the kind hospitality accorded to me and my colleague since our arrival here.

Although I have only recently embarked upon my tenure as the Ambassador of Japan, I look forward with great pleasure towards bringing fresh momentum to the process of further strengthening the existing long standing friendship between Kiribati and Japan.

As many of you may be aware, the Project for the Expansion of Betio Port was formalised in Tarawa on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2011, following careful evaluation of the Government of Kiribati's proposed project and based on its vision as set out within the "Kiribati Development Plan 2008-2011." Since that time, the Government of Japan has provided funding worth 39 million Australian dollars towards this project, and today we can all see the impressive results of that investment.

I understand that the Government of Kiribati has been striving for socio-economic development of the country and that it faces many and varied challenges in comparison with other countries. Not least of these is intensifying effect of climate change, especially with regard to rising sea levels. Furthermore, the vast expanse of ocean surrounding Kiribati and its atolls dispersed over more than 3.5 million square kilometres of sea, necessitates the need for a strong and reliable infrastructure for both inter-island as well as international shipping. In this regard, I am happy to say that this project is not only timely but also a long term investment for a sustainable future of the people of Kiribati.

Therefore, I enthusiastically congratulate the people of Kiribati on their achievement. Certainly, the inauguration of the upgraded Betio Port heralds a new era of improved sea transportation, especially international shipping. The expanded port offers improved berthing facilities compatible with bigger and heavier ocean liners and the new cargo handling equipment will not only make loading and unloading more efficient but also contribute towards Betio Port becoming more harmonized with international shipping standards.

At this juncture, I would also like to acknowledge the cooperation of all stakeholders in the timely and successful completion of this project namely: the Government of Kiribati and respective agencies such as the Kiribati Ports Authority (KPA), the Japanese Implementation team, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Japanese consultant Ecoh Coporation and the contractors Dai Nippon – TOA Joint Venture, as without their partnership this project would not have been possible. As we can witness today, it has indeed been a rewarding partnership. Based on your remarkable teamwork, innovative techniques and positive attitudes, the construction work was completed three months ahead of schedule. I have no doubt that such an accomplishment by the stakeholders is highly appreciated by all concerned.

And finally, may I take this opportunity to remind everyone of the vital importance of maintaining these improved facilities. The onus now falls upon the concerned authorities to undertake all necessary upkeep of the new facilities to ensure their continued longevity.

I am confident that we all share the aspiration that the Betio Port facilities will effectively serve the needs of the people of Kiribati from many years to come.

It is my sincere hope that the successful completion of the Project for the Expansion of Betio Port will have further strengthened the existing strong friendship between the people and Governments of Kiribati and Japan.

Thank you very much for your attention and Ko rabwa.

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**The End.**