

**Speech by H.E. Mr. Takuji Hanatani, Ambassador of Japan,
At the Grant Contract Signing Ceremony for “The Project for
Construction of Ba Women’s Training Centre”**

Wednesday, 18 February 2015, 2:30 p.m., at the Embassy of Japan

Honourable Dr. Jiko Luveni (チコ・ルベニ), Speaker of Parliament,

Honourable Rosy Akbar (ロウジィ・アクバー), Minister for
Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation,

Marama na Tui Ba (マラマナトゥインバ), Adi Laite Koroirua (アンデ
ィ・ライテ・コロイルア),

Dr. Maria Doton (マリア・ドトン), President of Ba Women’s Forum,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon, Bula vinaka, Namaste, As-salaam-alaikum (アッサ
ラーム・アライクム) and Konnichiwa.

On behalf of the government and people of Japan, I thank you all
for your kind presence in this Grant Contract signing ceremony.
Today, we formalize Japan’s assistance to Ba Women’s Forum for
the construction of Ba Women’s Training Centre.

I am very pleased to say that through our Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects Programme or GGP in short, the Government of Japan is providing funding assistance worth FJ\$492,900 for the construction of a two-story training centre which will have a sewing room, a kitchen, two other training rooms and a hall. Additionally, this project also covers the first workshop to be held at the training centre, which will be geared towards potential trainers who wish to gain skills in handicrafts and food preservation.

Indeed, it is befitting that we have just formalized our assistance for the Ba Women's Training Centre in the presence of such women who have risen to set exceptional benchmarks in Fiji, especially for the empowerment of women. Honourable Dr. Jiko Luveni is a former Minister for Women and now Fiji's first female Speaker of Parliament. Honourable Rosy Akbar is the current Minister for Women. Marama na Tui Ba, Adi Laite Koroirua is the paramount chief of Ba and Dr. Maria Doton, besides being a doctor, is the driving force behind the Ba Women's Forum.

I acknowledge that the Ba Women's Forum strives for improving 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. I hope the new training centre will not only

fill such a void but also contribute towards making the Ba Women's Forum a leading women's organization in the country.

I have learnt from both Honourable Dr. Jiko Luveni and Honourable Rosy Akbar on how important areas such as reproductive health, violence against women, gender issues and the overall empowerment of women have been mainstreamed into the policies of Prime Minister Bainimarama's government. Based on such merit, Japan is pleased to be of small assistance to Fiji's efforts on the empowerment of women.

At this juncture, I wish to highlight the progress on women's empowerment in Japan. Last September Japan hosted the "World Assembly for Women", where Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced new initiatives and policies, re-invigorating the empowerment of women, both domestically and globally. Soon after the general elections in December 2014, the newly seated government of Japan, led by Honourable Abe reiterated its commitment towards empowerment of women with the motto, "Creating a society in which women shine".

As Honourable Rosy Akbar hails from Ba, I believe this occasion gives her added joy. Honourable Minister, I wish to request for your

Ministry's ongoing support for the Ba Women's Forum Training Centre in areas such as training programmes and resources.

Since 1990, Japan has provided assistance to Fiji through 325 GGP projects, with the total value being approximately US\$ 18 million. In this regard, I wish to reassure you of Japan's commitment on providing continued assistance for Fiji's development.

Before I conclude, I wish to applaud all the stakeholders for the cooperation given to us, in order to make this project a reality. Upon completion, this training centre will be a source of hope and inspiration to the women of Fiji, especially at the grassroots level. The harmonization of efforts and partnership from the government, the citizens and the chiefly level is commendable. This is what I call - real nation building.

To conclude, I am confident that this project will further strengthen the friendship between the people and governments of Japan and Fiji.

Thank you, vinaka vakalevu, dhanyavaadh, shukriya (シュークリア) and arigatō gozaimasu.

The End.