
**Speech by Mr. Tsuguyoshi Hada, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of
Japan, At the Ground Breaking Ceremony for
“The Project for Reconstruction of the Nippon Causeway”
Funded by the Government of Japan, Friday, 28 July 2017**

His Excellency Mr. Taneti Maamau, President of the Republic of Kiribati,

Honourable Ruateki Tekaiara, Minister for Public Works and Utilities,

Honourable Chief Justice,

Honourable Ministers and Officials of the Government of the Republic of Kiribati,

Members of Diplomatic Corps,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mauri Nte Bakantaai Aei, Good Afternoon and Konnichiwa.

Today, I am honoured to participate in the ground breaking ceremony of the project for Reconstruction of the Nippon Causeway worth 3.8 billion Japanese Yen equivalent to 49 million Australian dollars funded by the Government of Japan. I am pleased to say that this is one of Japan’s most significant development cooperation projects in Kiribati.

Thirty years ago, the wide tidal passage between Betio and South Tarawa could only be crossed using a simple and narrow footpath or via a ferry, which operated every two hours, only during daytime. Difficulty faced by people is imaginable.

During the construction of this Causeway, the Dai Nippon Construction Company also faced challenges due to high tides, but it overcame such difficulties to complete the 3.5-kilometre Causeway which since then, has made commute between the passage permanently accessible and safe. The completion of the Causeway significantly strengthened public transportation and overall economic development of Kiribati.

After years of aging and deterioration caused by heavy rain, storm and tidal surges, parts of the Causeway collapsed about two years ago. This led to the shortage of food, fuel and other essential supplies in parts of South Tarawa that were cut off from Betio and its main port. Betio residents had difficulty getting to work and school. The Government of Kiribati undertook immediate rehabilitation works to restore the Causeway, and requested the Japanese Government for reconstruction of the Causeway, in line with achieving a long-term strengthening solution.

A thorough preparatory survey was carried out to ensure that the reconstructed Causeway is resilient to effects of climate change and natural conditions for its longevity. Upon completion of this survey in May 2016, our former Ambassador visited Kiribati two months later in July, to formalize this project with the Kiribati Government.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in addition to this Causeway, Japan has supported the development of Kiribati in various areas, through projects like the expansion of Betio Port, upgrading of electric power supply in Tarawa, construction of Tungaru Central Hospital, and the development of educational facilities at King George V and Elaine Bernacchi School. Furthermore, in order to enhance future leadership of island countries, we are implementing the Pacific LEADS training programme for young leaders. Four young civil servants from Kiribati have joined this programme and are currently studying at Japanese universities for two and half years. In August this year, five more i-Kiribati will be joining this programme.

Japan is also providing assistance to countries vulnerable to climate change on a global basis. Japan has donated 1.5 billion US dollars to the Green Climate Fund, or GCF. Earlier this month, the GCF board endorsed Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as an accredited entity of GCF, so we would like to make GCF more accessible to Kiribati through JICA. In the past 10 years, JICA has also been dispatching volunteers to serve in areas prioritised by the Kiribati Government. We are enhancing such cooperation as currently there are 7 Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) working in the Health, Education and Sports sectors of Kiribati.

It gives me great pleasure to reaffirm Japan's commitment for providing continued assistance for the sustainable development of

this country in line with the Kiribati Government's national development objectives. I extend my best wishes for successful completion of the reconstruction of the Nippon Causeway and I request all stakeholders to continue your support for the contractor and lead consultants to ensure smooth implementation of the project. I look forward to our visit to Kiribati in April 2019, to celebrate the reopening of the Causeway.

I conclude with confidence that this project will further strengthen friendship between Japan and the Republic of Kiribati.

Ko Rabwa, Thank You, and Arigato Gozaimashita.

THE END.