

**Speech by H.E. Mr. Masahiro Omura, Ambassador of Japan, at the Send-off
Ceremony for Pacific LEADS Programme Participants
Monday 20 August 2018**

Good Afternoon and Konnichiwa.

I warmly welcome you to the Pacific LEADS send-off reception and thank you for joining us on this occasion. I have been in Fiji for a little over a year now and I am delighted to be hosting my second Pacific LEADS send-off reception. This is the third batch of participants in this programme and I would like to congratulate all the recipients which includes 2 from Fiji, 2 from Vanuatu, 1 from Tuvalu and 1 from Nauru. I also wish to acknowledge the kind support and cooperation towards this programme by the respective governments.

The Pacific LEADS Programme was one of the commitments made by the leaders at the 7th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM7) in 2015, to provide an opportunity for young government officials in the region to pursue postgraduate studies in Japan and undergo job training at central government agencies and local governments.

Japan has now achieved the commitment to accept 100 participants from 14 Pacific Island Countries, with a total of 41 participants in the first batch in 2016, 41 participants in the second batch in 2017 and 20 participants in this third batch. A total of 28 Fijians, 2 Tuvaluans, 1 Nauruan and 7 Ni-Vanuatu are part of this programme.

I am pleased to say that the continuation of the Pacific-LEADS programme was further agreed upon by the Leaders at the 8th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM8), in Iwaki, Fukushima in May of this year. JICA will inform each government of the application for this extended programme later.

I am also pleased to acknowledge the presence of two participants from Fiji who were part of the first batch in 2016 and have since graduated from their respective Universities this year. Ladies and Gentlemen, an introduction of experience in Japan by Mr. Tomasi Lakeba from the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts, who graduated with a Masters of Arts in Education from the International Christian University, is programmed this afternoon. I am looking forward to hear his experience in Japan. The remaining participants from the first batch will be graduating later this year or early 2019.

To the six participants here today, I hope that the specialized knowledge that you will acquire from two and half years study in Japan will help develop you as a person and most importantly develop your capacity as a civil servant to effectively contribute to the development aspirations of the country you represent. I wish all of you will be in good health and success during your study in Japan.

Thank you and Arigato Gozaimasu