
**Speech by Counsellor Tsuguyoshi Hada, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Japan, on the
Occasion of the Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Tarawa,
20th November 2018, Betio, Kiribati**

*His Excellency Mr. Taneti Maamau, Te Beretitenti,
Mr. Michael Goldman, Charge d'Affairs, U.S. Embassy in Kiribati,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am greatly honoured to be invited to participate in the Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Tarawa hosted by the Government of Kiribati. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that one of the fiercest battles of WW II's Pacific Theater unfolded here in this Betio's calm surroundings from 20th to 23rd November, 1943.

On behalf of the people and government of Japan, I would like to sincerely express, with profound respect, my condolences for the loss of Japanese and American lives during the Battle of Tarawa and also for the loss of I-Kiribati lives during WWII.

Japan was devastated in defeat at the end of the War. The United States opened up Japan's path to return to the international community. Japan signed a peace treaty with 48 nations in September 1951.

Japan was recovered from devastation based on values as freedom, democracy and rule of law and had been contributing actively to the peace, prosperity and development of the international society through non-military cooperation by means of its ODA, based on the policy of "Proactive Contribution to Peace."

I would like to mention two significant events which demonstrated the reconciliation that Japan and the United States have attained. In May 2016, Mr. Barack Obama, the then President of the United States and Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan stood together at the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima where the atomic bomb was dropped on August 6th 1945. Then, in December 2016, Japanese Prime Minister Abe reciprocated by visiting the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor, with President Obama. Japan and the United States, represent the solid and strongest allies with such

deep unity rarely found anywhere in history. This unshakable Japan-U.S. alliance is the ultimate cornerstone of peace, freedom, and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

Kiribati was involved in the war, in which its people greatly suffered. Today, Japan and Kiribati have become closest partners in the Pacific. In May this year, His Excellency President Maamau honored us with his distinguished presence at the the 8th Pacific Leaders Meeting (PALM8) to address issues of common regional and international importance.

I also wish to mention that since the end of the war, through cooperation with Kiribati Government, we have been able to bring repatriation teams to Kiribati, pay respects to all the war dead here and take the remains of the Japanese War Dead, ensuring their return to their home country. We hope to continue this effort in the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Even today, there are wars, armed conflicts and terrorism affecting the lives of millions across the world. It is our duty to make the international community, especially the younger generation, more aware that the peace and prosperity we all enjoy today exists on the sacrifices made during the war.

I would like to conclude my address by sharing a quote from Prime Minister Abe's address at the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbour in 2016;

"Ours is an "alliance of hope" that will lead us to the future.

What has bonded us together is the power of reconciliation, made possible through the spirit of tolerance.

Even today, the horrors of war have not been eradicated from the surface of the world. There is no end to the spiral where hatred creates hatred.

The world needs the spirit of tolerance and the power of reconciliation now — and especially now.

Japan and the United States, which have eradicated hatred and cultivated friendship and trust on the basis of common values, are now, and especially now, taking responsibility for appealing to the world about the importance of tolerance and the power of reconciliation.

That is precisely why the Japan-U.S. alliance is "an alliance of hope.""

Kam Rabwa, Thank you and Arigato Gozaimasu.

The End.