

Dr. APINELU Eselealofa, the High Commissioner Designate of Tuvalu to Fiji

Mr. Falasese Tupau, Deputy High Commissioner of Tuvalu to Fiji,

Distinguished Guests,

Members of the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Talofa, Ohayo Gozaimasu and a Very Good Morning to you all.

Firstly, on behalf of the Government and people of Japan, I would like to congratulate Dr. APINELU Eselealofa, on your new appointment and posting to Fiji. It is indeed an honor to work with you, and I look forward to further strengthening relations between our two countries through a close partnership with you.

Unfortunately, due to travel restrictions we are unable to organize the formal handing over of this project in Tuvalu.

Nevertheless, I am happy to have the ceremony here in Fiji with the esteemed presence of the High Commissioner Designate.

On behalf of the Government and people of Japan, I am honored to handover a new 3,500 litre Water Distribution Truck to the Nanumea Kaupule. This truck is worth one hundred thirty one thousand Australian dollars (AU\$130,722) and was procured under the “Project for Provision of Water Distribution Truck for Nanumea Kaupule”. The Government of Japan funded this project under its Grassroots Grant Assistance Program or GGP.

Tuvalu is one of the smallest countries in the world but it is at the forefront of facing the full brunt of climate change. Due to the harmful impacts of climate change, Tuvalu has been experiencing severe drought conditions in the past few years. I know that Tuvalu is experiencing of lot of water shortages, and I heard this year’s drought is more serious than usual. I would like to express my heartfelt sympathy to the people of Tuvalu.

In recognizing the hardships faced by the people of Nanumea, the Government of Japan provided funding assistance to the Kaupule to purchase the new 3,500 liter water tanker truck. I hope that handing over this water tanker truck from the Japanese Government would help ease the difficulties that Nanumea Island is facing . I firmly believe that this water tanker truck will effectively enhance water delivery services by assisting the Nanumea Kaupule in providing immediate relief to the one hundred and twenty four (124) drought-stricken households.

I am pleased that this project is aligned with the Tuvalu Government's National-Development-Strategy for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 and its guiding principles such as; having access to drinking water and sanitation, water management and provision of water as well as sanitation services. Such harmonization of our project objectives with Tuvalu's national development aspirations is key to Japan's Development Cooperation with Tuvalu.

Additionally, this project is in line with the Priority Area of Cooperation 3: *Climate Change and Disaster Resilience*, of the Joint Action Plan for Strengthening Pacific Bonds and for Mutual Prosperity, endorsed through the PALM9 Leaders Declaration in July 2021.

I wish to highlight that since 1992, Japan has been consistently supporting projects in Tuvalu, from grassroots projects to the enhancement of public utilities and infrastructure such as projects for Manu Falau, the vessels Nivaga III and Manui which are indispensable for Tuvalu's social economic development, the Funafuti Port, generators, provision of fuel for the electric power supply, assistance for the country's only public high school as well as provision of equipment for the health and medical services sector.

To-date, we have implemented a total of 49 GGP projects which are collectively worth approximately \$3.4 million USD. Over these 30 years, our GGP projects have continued to stand as milestones of Japan-Tuvalu relations, signifying the growing

cooperation between our countries and commitment to the development of Tuvalu.

At this juncture, I wish to pay tribute to the late Mr. ABE Shinzo, former Prime Minister of Japan, who was laid to rest on Friday 8th July. Mr. Abe served as Prime Minister for eight years and eight months, the longest term in Japanese political history.

He demonstrated strong leadership in the international community and it was a great honour to have Hon. Simon Kofe, Minister for Justice, Communication and Foreign Affairs, visit the Embassy and express his condolence as well as praise for Mr. Abe's achievements on behalf of the people of Tuvalu. It was at this moment, that I realized that there is a resonance of mutual respect between the people of Tuvalu and the people of Japan.

The Free and Open Indo-Pacific Vision is the inspirational brainchild of the Late Mr. ABE. His commitment and vision for a Free and Open Indo Pacific laid the platform for Japan's development cooperation in Asia/Pacific. He greatly advanced the

relationship between Japan and the Pacific Island Countries, including Tuvalu. I am pleased that through our continuous support to Tuvalu and our broader Pacific family, Japan will continue to promote this vision and commitment.

I understand that HE. Hon. Kausea Natano, the Prime Minister of Tuvalu attended the 4th Asia Pacific Water Summit in Kumamoto, Japan, in April, of this year. He is rightfully concerned about the impacts of climate change on water, as highlighted in his keynote address at the Small Islands State (SIS) Session at the Summit. I know he showed interest in Japanese technology and hope that somehow Japanese technology can one day be utilized to aid in the development of Tuvalu's water sector.

PM Natano is an outstanding leader in the Pacific and served as co-chairman with Mr. Suga-the former Japanese Prime Minister on PALM9, and adopted the Joint Action Plans. Japan will keep putting efforts to strengthen Climate change countermeasures and infrastructure development through the Pacific Bond (KIZUNA) Policy, which will continue to further

strengthen the cooperation between Japan and the PICs through “All Japan” efforts based on Japan’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision.

I conclude with confidence that this project will further strengthen friendship between the Governments and peoples of Japan and Tuvalu.

Fakafetai lasi, Thank You and Arigato Gozaimasu.

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