

Honorable Ifereimi Vasu, Minister for i-Taukei Affairs, Culture, Heritage and Arts,

Mr. Pita Tagicakirewa, Permanent Secretary for i-Taukei Affairs,

Mr. Aporosa Silatolu, Director for the Centre for Appropriate Technology and

Development,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Yadra Vinaka, Namaste and Very Good Morning to you all.

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Honorable Minister and the Ministry of i-Taukei Affairs for hosting this Grant Contract Signing Ceremony as well as for the warm hospitality accorded to us today. May I also take this opportunity to congratulate the Honorable Vasu on being appointed the Minister for i-Taukei Affairs, Culture, Heritage and Arts, in the new Government of Fiji seated after the 2022 General Elections.

My most important mission as Ambassador of Japan to Fiji is to maintain and strengthen the close cooperation and friendship between Japan and Fiji, and in line with the policies of the new government, I will provide the support that Fiji truly

needs. Honorable Minister, I look forward to working closely with you in forming a strong working partnership towards helping address the development needs of the iTaukei.

On behalf of the Government and people of Japan, it is my honor to formalize with Honorable Minister Vasu, the Japanese Government's Grant Assistance for "The Project for Improvement of the Centre for Appropriate Technology and Development". The project consists of the construction of 3 furnished classrooms as well as a 100 bed furnished dormitory to the Centre for Appropriate Technology and Development, for which the Government of Japan will provide a grant assistance of FJ\$1,058,812. This project is being implemented through Japan's "Grassroots Grant Assistance scheme". I wish to take this opportunity to highlight that since 1990, Japan has implemented 415 Grassroots Grant Assistance projects, which are collectively worth more than US\$31 million, to assist grassroots communities of Fiji.

That being so, this project will be the number 416 and a commemorative project, as the first time Government of Japan to assist Ministry of iTaukei Affairs. I understand that the new Coalition Government has identified improving the economic position of the iTaukei and lift living standards of villages and settlements as a major policy goal.

Generally, one Grassroots Grant Assistance project funding is worth up to FJ\$200,000, but to begin a new cooperation with Ministry of i-Taukei Affairs, this project is specially arranged to be five times the amount of a normal project.

In this occasion, I am very pleased to assist Ministry of i-Taukei Affairs, just after the establishment of the new government. By implementing this project, the delivery of theoretical based classes and practical workshop centered learning will be meaningfully enhanced. I-Taukei students here will acquire leadership qualities that are necessary to enhance and facilitate community development. And they will have the right foothold to succeed in their own lives and will contribute to the development of their own communities and the nation at large. I consider that education for young people, their capacity building and upgrading of their skills is extremely important to achieve a medium and long-term economic development in Fiji. As such, it is important to invest in institutions like the Centre for Appropriate Technology and Development, which can provide a second chance at education for young people, especially to those who are not part of the mainstream education

system or who, upon reaching employment age, have faced challenges in getting a decent job.

I wish to urge all the stakeholders of the project to ensure the timely and successful completion of this project. I am sure the new infrastructure, facilities and furniture will serve the students for many years to come through proper up keep and maintenance.

I conclude with confidence that this project will improve the economic position of the iTaukei and lift living standards of villages and settlements as well as further strengthen the friendship between the Governments and peoples of Japan and Fiji.

Thank You, Vinaka Vakalevu, Dhanyavaadh and Arigatou Gozaimasu.

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