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Address by H.E. Mr. KAWAKAMI Fumihiko, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Fiji  
at the Handover Ceremony for Nasau Central Secondary School  
on 21<sup>st</sup> day of July 2023, Nasau

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The Honourable Aseri Radrodro, Minister for Education,

Mr. Mika Waqanibau, Head of School,

Ratu Isoa Nayasilevu, Turaga na Tui Nasau,

Government Officials,

The School Management, Parents, Teachers and Students,

Members of the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Yadra Vinaka, Namaste, Ohayo Gozaimasu and Good Morning.

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Tikina o Nasau for graciously welcoming us with a traditional ceremony today.

On behalf of the Government and people of Japan, it is my honor to hand over the 2 new school buildings consisting of five classrooms and 1 staffroom furnished with 150 sets of new student desks and chairs, including 5 new sets of teachers' desk and chairs, worth Five Hundred and Forty Thousand Fijian Dollars (FJ\$ \$540,134). This project will not

only provide the students with an opportunity to study in a conducive learning environment, but also ensure that there is a reliable evacuation center for the surrounding communities.

Japan has provided funding for this project through its Grassroots Grant Assistance Scheme. I signed the agreement for this project last March. Today, I am very pleased to complete the project and hand it over to you. I am proud that the Secondary school was built for the first time in the Tikina of Nasau with the support of Japan.

Japan's strong commitment towards improving the education sector of Fiji, is the basis for our decision to award this funding to the recipient schools.

Japan established diplomatic relations with Fiji in 1970, shortly after Fiji's independence. Since then, we have been promoting a cooperative relationship for more than 50 years. Fiji is a close friend and linked by the Pacific Ocean, sharing fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, and rule of law, respect for human rights, and the environment.

Over the past 50 years, Japan has provided an accumulated total of approximately 1.6 billion Fiji dollars of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Fiji up to last year. Japan does not impose its own agenda when providing assistance. We respect the needs of the partner countries to the maximum extent possible. Our relationship is not a mere donor-recipient association, rather it is based wholly on equal partnership.

I believe that Fiji's economic comparative advantage is its high quality Human Resource. If Fiji can develop more and higher quality human resources in the future, the potential for economic development will increase. Education is the key to human resource development. From this perspective, the Japanese government has prioritized support for the education sector.

Since 1990, Japan has implemented 423 projects through its Grassroots Grant Assistance scheme, with the total value exceeding 32 million US dollars. Out of the 423 projects, 238 were implemented in the education sector.

Dear Students; as difficulties for humanity grow, the world needs fresh minds, fresh perspectives, better results, innovative thinking and breakthroughs. You will all grow into future professionals and leaders of Fiji with the wealth of knowledge, virtues and ethics imparted by your teachers, parents, elders and all those who help you become successful. This is where your family, your community, your country and the wider global village will need your input to lead humanity into the future. This is why I encourage you all to work hard and try your best to succeed academically as well as in your co-curricular activities. To make your parents, guardians and teachers proud, I wish you all to put in your best effort in order to excel academically.

The Fiji Government has made significant progress and improvements in the education sector. In particular, the introduction of “Free Education Program” for primary and secondary schools is an excellent policy. However, there is still much work to be done to improve Fiji's education system, including improvement in the quality of teaching

and leadership of school system, and the curriculum to meet the needs of the labour market.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend Honourable Minister for his strong leadership in working with his team to resolve these challenges and achieving results since he assumed office.

Japanese Embassy will continue to support the efforts of the Minister and the Ministry of Education and will continue to provide support to the education sector.

I urge all stakeholders to please look after the new facilities and carry out timely maintenance so that Nasau Central Secondary School continues to serve the students and wider communities for many years into the future.

I am very pleased to reaffirm that Japan is committed to providing continued assistance for the sustainable development of Fiji in the years to come.

Investing in children's education is investing in the future of the country. This is a great empowerment for the country.

I conclude with confidence that this project will meaningfully contribute to improve the quality of education in Nasau as well as to further strengthen the friendship between the governments and peoples of Japan and Fiji.

Vinaka Vakalevu, Dhanyavaadh, Arigato Gozaimasu and Thank You.

**The End.**