**Address by H.E. Mr. TAZAWA Hiroki, First Secretary, Head of Official Development Assistance Unit, Embassy of Japan,**

**At the Handover Ceremony for Rt. Nacagilevu Memorial Primary School**

 On 25 July 2023, Vunisea, Island of Kadavu

Honorable , the Minister for Education

Mr. , the Head of School for Memorial Primary School

Traditional Leaders

Government Officials

Distinguished Guests

Members of the Media,

Students

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Yadra Vinaka and Good Morning.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Minister for Education, his officials, the and . Memorial Primary School for your hospitality and the warm welcome extended to me and my colleague today.

On behalf of the People and Government of Japan, it is my honor to handover a newly constructed and furnished three classroom building to the Minister for Education on behalf of . Memorial Primary School. We provided funding worth three hundred and fifty five thousand Fiji Dollars (FJ$355,979) for this project through its Grassroots Grant Assistance Scheme.

**Please allow me to explain how we assisted the school**

In 2020, TC Harold severely damaged schools on Kadavu Island and this devastation occurred while the recovery and reconstruction from TC Keni was still underway. Majority of the established school structures were completely damaged and was in need of rehabilitation and upgrading. In recognizing these problems and hardship faced by the school, the Embassy of Japan in Fiji decided to assist the school

I sympathise for the people of Kadavu as they have had to face the brunt of severe cyclones in quick successions, in addition to the hardships and loss of livelihoods brought about by COVID-19 pandemic. I respect your resilience against such difficulties. The fact that this project was completed after such a difficult time, speaks volumes of the resilience, hard work and dedication of the people of Kadavu.

Today, I am pleased to say that we have been able to provide assistance to address the difficulties faced by . Memorial School and its surrounding communities. The new facility will be crucial in delivering quality education to the students. It is further reassuring to see that the new building is built to such standards which will enable it to serve the community as an evacuation center during emergencies and natural disasters.

Moreover, this is in line with the Fiji Government’s National development objectives in leaving no one behind and complements SDG 4, *“ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning*.

I am very happy to say that since 1990, Japan has been providing assistance to grassroots communities in Fiji, by implementing more than 423 projects under its Grassroots Grant Assistance scheme, worth approximately 32 million US dollars. In the last 10 years, Japan’s assistance towards the Education sector in Fiji is approximately $12 million USD (approx. $26million FJD).

Since 2020, The Government of Japan has funded six rehabilitation projects for six schools in Kadavu worth approximately $5 Million Fiji Dollars (5 Million FJD).

I would also like to take this opportunity to applaud the efforts of the Minister, Hon. for his leading role on the various developments and improvement carried out through the Education sector in Fiji so far. Such initiatives by the Fiji Government empowers all children and even those from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds to access quality education. I am sure that with the leadership of the Minister and the Ministry of Education in the years to come, Fiji will be able to foster a much brighter future for all Fijians.

**Students of . Memorial Primary School!**

Education has become even more important now than before. The world needs new thinkers, new ideas, better solutions and innovations as humanity is facing increasing challenges. Through the guidance of teachers and the delivery of quality education, students will become future leaders and professionals of Fiji who will help tackle the increasing challenges that the world is now facing. I urge all stakeholders to please look after the new facility and carry out the necessary maintenance when needed so that it serves future students of . Memorial.

Finally, I would also like to thank the Engineers of the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Meteorological Services for their role in the successful implementation of this project. We wouldn’t have completed the project without your technical advice and professional assessment.

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

Vinaka Vakalevu and Thank You.

**The End.**