**Speech by H.E. Mr. KAWAKAMI Fumihiro, Ambassador of Japan to Tuvalu, at the Handing Over Ceremony for “The Project for Procurement of Generator - Parts” and the “Installation of Workboats to Nivaga III and Manufolau”**

15:30 pm, Thursday, 31 August 2023,\*\*\*, Tuvalu

The Honorable Kausea Natano, Prime Minister of Tuvalu,

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Talofa, Konnichiwa and a very Good Afternoon to You All.

At the outset, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Honorable Prime Minister and the Ministry of Transport, Energy and Tourism, for the warm hospitality extended to us as well as for organizing this auspicious occasion today. I must also convey my gratitude to the people of Tuvalu for making us feel at home with their natural friendliness, since our arrival here.

Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of the Government and people of Japan, it is my great honour to hand over two 600kw generator-parts worth approximately $1.7million AUD and two workboats approximately worth Two Hundred Forty Two Thousand Australian Dollars ($242,214 AUD) to the Government of Tuvalu. The parts for two generators will replace worn-out components at the Fogafale power plant, which was also upgraded by Japanese funding assistance worth 12 million AUD in 2005. The workboats will be installed on marine vessels, the Nivaga III and the Manufolau.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it gives me much happiness to say that Japan established diplomatic relations with Tuvalu in April 1979, six months after your proud nation, small in size but a leader in climate change advocacy today, gained independence.

Since then, Japan and Tuvalu have enhanced friendship and have built a relationship of trust as important partners in the Pacific region as well as amongst the international community.

In particular, relations between Japan and Tuvalu have become closer since the administration of the Honorable Prime Minister Nathano was seated in office.

The Japanese Government highly appreciates the distinguished participation of the Honorable Prime Minister Natano as Co-Chair of the 9th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting or PALM 9, which was held in July 2021. With the successful conclusion of the PALM 9, a clear path of enhanced cooperation and partnership was established between Japan, Tuvalu and the wider Pacific.

In addition, Japan’s State Minister, Mr. Takei visited Tuvalu in May this year. His visit is the first Japanese ministerial level visit to Tuvalu since the Honorable Prime Minister Natano took office. It gives me joy to see that State Minister Takei’s visit to Tuvalu was quite successful which helped elevate our bilateral relations to a higher level.

I also accompanied Minister Takei, in what was memorably my first visit to Tuvalu. It gave me immense pleasure to see first-hand that Japanese assistance is directly contributing to improving the daily lives and livelihoods of the people of Tuvalu, as vessels such as the Manufolau, Nivaga III, Manaui, and the Manaui II, are like the lifeblood of inter-island travel and shipping within and beyond the eight respective islands, which essentially form the sovereign nation of Tuvalu. Furthermore, Fogafale Power Plant Upgraded by Japan forms the backbone of power generation in Funafuti's by generating all its electricity and meeting its energy needs.

Ladies and Gentlemen, over the past 40 years, Japan has provided an accumulated total of approximately 185 million Australian Dollars worth of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Tuvalu, for its sustainable social and economic development.

In particular, the Transport and Energy sector has been one of the priority areas of our assistance. In addition to the Fogafale power plant, we have provided approximately 14.6 million AUD for the procurement of diesel fuel for electricity generation. We have also been providing technical assistance to support the best mix of a renewable energy and diesel generation since 2017.

I am also pleased to see that Japan's cooperation in the transportation and energy sector is aligned to Tuvalu’s National Strategy for Sustainable Development or the “Te Kete” and its “Strategic Priority Area 5: Infrastructure Development. The parts for the generators to be handed over will enhance Tuvalu’s capacity in providing consistent electricity supply to the general population as well as to relevant agencies which in turn provide essential services to people. The two workboats will assist the two large marine vessels, the Manaufolau and the Nivaga III, in improving services to all the islands, ensuring safe transportation of passengers and goods.

May I also highlight that Japan's assistance in this area is in line with the Priority Area of Cooperation 4) Strengthening Foundation for Sustainable and Resilient Economic Development, of the Joint Action Plan for Strengthening Pacific Bonds and for Mutual Prosperity, endorsed by the Leaders in the PALM 9 Leaders' Declaration, eminently Co-Chaired by Honorable Prime Minister Natano.

I wish to emphasize that Japan does not impose its own agenda when providing assistance. We respect the sovereignty and 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.

Japan remains committed to supporting Tuvalu’s socio-economic development to boost economic prosperity and address challenges in an Indo-Pacific Way under the vision of Japan’s new plan for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. We are very proud to be able to continue contributing towards improving the quality of lives of the people of Tuvalu through the assistance provided by Japan.

I conclude with confidence that Japan's continued support will help strengthen the foundations of resilient and sustainable development in Tuvalu as well as further enhance friendship between the Governments and peoples of Japan and Tuvalu.

Fakafetai Lasi, Thank You and Arigato Gozaimasu.