**Address by H.E. Mr. Kenichiro Tanaka,**

**The Charge d’Affaires ad Interim, Embassy of Japan,**

**At the Handover Ceremony for The Project for Construction of Nabaitavo District School Building**

On 13th October 2023, Nabaitavo Village, Naitasiri

Honorable , Minister for Education

Mr. Apenisa Vakacereivalu, Head of School for Nabaitavo District School

Traditional Leaders

Government Officials

Distinguished Guests

Members of the Media,

Students

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Konichiwa, Bula Vinaka and Good afternoon.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Minister for Education, his officials, the of Nabaitavo and Nabaitavo District School for the hospitality and warm traditional welcome extended to me and my colleagues this afternoon.

On a different note, I would like to congratulate the Fiji Water Flying Fijian on their performance to reach the Quarter Final of the Rugby World Cup in France. I cannot say the same for Japan’s rugby team as we had lost to Argentina in the deciding pool match but overall, I am still happy with the Japanese team’s performance as well.

On an important note, on behalf of the People and Government of Japan, it is my honor to handover a newly constructed and furnished two classrooms building to the Minister for Education on behalf of Nabaitavo District School. We provided funding worth two hundred and ten thousand Fiji Dollars (FJ$210,465.67 FJD) for this project, which is implemented through its Grassroots Grant Assistance Scheme.

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

In 2022, The Embassy in collaboration with the Ministry of Education identified Nabaitavo District School as a school in dire need for new classrooms. The students of class 1 and class 2 were occupying the school dining hall and the kindergarten class were also using the dining hall veranda for classes. For quite some time, the children were exposed to the rain and cold winds on the verandah which made learning difficult especially for the youngest children of the school.

In recognizing the difficulties faced by the School, the Government of Japan decided to provide this Grassroots Grant Assistance which will overall aim at ensuring quality education is delivered to the students of Nabaitavo.

Today, I am pleased to say that we have been able to aid Nabaitavo District School and the surrounding communities in addressing some of the challenges that they face. The new facility will be crucial in delivering quality education to the students and in addition provide a safe and conducive learning space.

I sympathize with the people of Fiji, especially Nabaitavo and Naitasiri 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 Fiji in particular the people of the province of Nabaitavo and Naitasiri as a whole.

It gives me great pleasure to highlight that today is also the International Day for Disaster Reduction. This is a globally celebrated event to promote a global culture of disaster reduction, including disaster prevention, mitigation, and preparedness. It is reassuring to see that the new building is built to such standards which will enable and prepare the surrounding communities for any future emergency or natural disaster and will serve as an evacuation center.

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 aiding 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).

This year alone, we decided to fund 2 school projects in the province of Naitasiri out of 4 education sector projects. The total value is over five hundred thousand Fijian Dollars.

I take this opportunity to commend the Fiji Government, the Honorable Radrodro and his team for the continued efforts to improve the Education sector in Fiji. Your leadership and dedicated work towards Education sector in Fiji is applauding and I hope we can continue this friendship.

**Students of Nabaitavo District School**

A powerful tool that one can have to be successful in life is Education. Education has become even more important now and it can take you across the world if you pursue it with due diligence and determination. I urge you to work hard and make your parents, guardians, and teachers proud. Make use of the improved learning facility and furniture and do take care of it for the sake of future students of Nabaitavo District. I wish you all the best in your education.

Finally, I would also like to thank the school and the Head Teacher for closely monitoring this project, the contractor for your continued work with the Embassy and lastly, the Engineers of the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Meteorological Services for their role in the successful completion of this project. We wouldn’t have completed the project without your technical advice and professional assessment.

I once again reaffirm Japan’s continued commitment towards the Education sector and conclude with confidence that this project will further strengthen the friendship between the Governments and peoples of Japan and Fiji.

Arigato Gozaimasu, Vinaka Vakalevu and Thank You and Toso Viti Toso.

**The End.**