

**SPEECH BY AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN TO SAMOA H.E. MR. GENICHI TERASAWA ON  
THE HANDOVER CEREMONY FOR THE  
PROJECT OF RECONSTRUCTION OF VAISIGANO BRIDGE  
under  
JAPAN'S GRANT AID PROJECT**

Reverend Fiti Aloali'i,  
Honourable Prime Minister,  
Tuilaepa Fatialofa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi,  
Honourable Ministers of Cabinet,  
Honourable Speaker of the Parliament of Samoa and Members of  
Parliament,  
Members of Diplomatic Corps,  
Heads of International Organizations, Government Agencies, NGOs and  
the business community,

Talofa Lava,

E muamua ona ou fa'atalofa atu le paia ma le mamalu ole aofia ua  
potopoto mai lenei afiāfi.

*(First and foremost, Greetings and Talofa Lava to you all who have gathered here this evening)*

On behalf of the Government and the people of Japan, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations on the opening of the new Vaisigano Bridge. I am very happy that Japan has contributed to the success of this project to construct the new bridge.

This project faced many challenges, including the current pandemic. However, they were overcome thanks to the outstanding efforts of the Samoan government officials, including Hon. Prime Minister Tuilaepa. I would like to express my utmost respect to all the stakeholders involved.

Japan has been cooperating for development of maritime transportation and related infrastructure to strengthen connectivity in the Pacific island countries including Samoa. This is because oceans can be a constraint for development of the Pacific island countries where people are separated by

the oceans causing so much inconvenience.

As the people who share the Pacific, we feel that connecting people and goods is an important task for the social and economic development of island countries.

There is the Matautu wharf, behind this bridge. Japan has contributed to its development, together with the other development partners including New Zealand and the Asian Development Bank.

Our recent project for the wharf has made it possible for large freight or passenger ships to enter the port safely. The opening of this new bridge will allow tourists of cruiser ships and goods to have easy access to the downtown of the capital.

In October last year, Honorable Prime Minister Tuilaepa and Prime Minister ABE of Japan agreed to the new grant project to construct a new ship to connect between Samoa and overseas. The new ship is expected to go into service two years from now.

However, the current COVID-19 pandemic has bitterly been afflicting a huge number of people around the world and blocking cross-border travel. It is quite regrettable that tourists from overseas has not been able to come to Samoa, hence neither the Matautu wharf nor this new bridge could function fully for their roles.

To restore cross-border travels, what the world mostly needs is safe and effective vaccines. Japan joins a part of an international concerted efforts including Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America (in alphabetical order) for development and dissemination of vaccines so that island countries will continue to be free from COVID-19 and the Pacific can safely normalize their economic and social activities such as tourism.

However, some medical experts predict that it will take several years for safe and effective vaccines to be disseminated to Pacific island countries. The question is, how can we survive this difficulty until the economy is normalized?

In order to find possible solutions, next year, Japan will invite the leaders of the Pacific island countries to hold the 9th Pacific Island Countries Leaders Meeting. We would like to discuss earnestly with Honorable Prime Minister Tuilaepa along with leaders of Pacific island countries various agenda, such as overcoming the difficulties caused by the current pandemic, strengthening the health sector of the Pacific island countries, measures against climate change and natural disasters, maintaining the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific.

Lastly, the Olympic and Paralympic Games, Tokyo 2020, which were planned to be held this summer, are unfortunately deferred to next summer due to the pandemic. The people of Japan sincerely hope that we will hold both events in full-fledged form and meet the people from Samoa in Tokyo as a proof that humanity has overcome the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fa'afetai Lava.

Soifua.