

**CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTHDAY OF HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR OF
JAPAN - 21st February 2025**

Remarks by the Prime Minister, Honourable Fiame Naomi Mataafa On the occasion of the celebration of the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan hosted by the Ambassador of Japan, H.E Ryotaro Suzuki

Reverend Semikueva Fa'atoafe Ugapo
Afioga Tuimalealiifano Vaaletoa Sualauvi II and Masiofo
Members of the Council of Deputies
Cabinet Ministers
Speaker of the House
Leader of Opposition
Members of Parliament
Chief Justice and Members of the Judiciary
H.E Ryotaro Suzuki, Ambassador of Japan
Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Talofa and a pleasant good evening to you all.

I would like to thank Your Excellency, Ryotaro Suzuki, for the invitation to say a few words at this evening's reception to celebrate the 65th birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, Emperor Naruhito.

The celebrations this evening, is also about the relationship that both our countries established with the aim to nurture and enhance friendly relations.

Japan and Samoa have developed strong cordial relations that have prospered over the years. Japan and Samoa established diplomatic relations in April 1973 and this year marks 52 years of mutually beneficial partnership.

Like our other development partners, Japan's generous assistance through development cooperation has ensured that programs which Samoa could not invest in nor manage without the requisite technical expertise were well accommodated and resourced to overcome the constraints. The JICA volunteer programme in Samoa is an integral aspect in our relationship. The deployment of JICA volunteers to critical areas such as

education, health, water/sanitation and environmental management has contributed immensely to the development of these areas.

Japan continues to provide key economic infrastructure with related heavy-duty equipment. Last year, we signed an MoU under Japan's Grant Assistance for Economic and Social Development Programme for the procurement of a new drilling rig for the Samoa Water Authority and the Exchange of Notes for the new Health Science Campus and resource centre at Le Papaigalagala campus

Japan is committed to funding small-scale projects that directly benefit our village communities contributing to their social and economic development. A number of valuable projects funded under Japan's Grant Assistance for Grass Roots Human Security Projects recently, included the reconstruction of the Samatau Primary school, the building of the Avele College Hall, the construction of the Mental Health Facility of Goshen Trust Mental Health Services, the handover of a Mobile Dental Clinic to the Ministry of Health, the handover of water tank trucks and pumper water tanks to FESA and the handover of 5 Toyota Landcruisers to the Samoa Water Authority to assist with routine inspection and repair works. Two weeks ago, Japan and the Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organisations (SUNGO) signed an agreement for the construction of the Samoa Integrated Training Centre for Community Development.

Your Excellency,

Our bilateral relations have achieved much through people-to-people exchange activities and the comprehensive development efforts of both countries. The exchange of high-level visits plays a crucial role in enhancing cooperation and commitment in our bilateral relations. In February 2024, Samoa hosted the visit of Japan's former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon Ms. Yoko Kamikawa. We also received a senior level visit from the Japanese Ministry of Justice in support of democratic governance with a reciprocal visit of our Minister of Justice and delegation to Japan.

In July last year, I attended the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM10) in Tokyo and had the opportunity to meet bilaterally with Prime Minister Kishida discussing cooperation that are aligned with the "2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent" which would translate to activities addressing country needs and the delivery of assistance bilaterally.

These are, but a few highlights of the remarkable partnership our two countries have engaged in recently that continue to foster effective cooperation for the development of Samoa and reap mutual benefits for our two countries.

Your Excellency,

To conclude, I would like to offer our warmest congratulations on the celebration of his Majesty Emperor Naruhito's birthday.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I invite you all to please raise your glasses with me and let us pay tribute: "for the continued good health and prosperity of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito, and to continuing good relations between Samoa and Japan."

Ia Manuia!