

**\*\*Speech by His Excellency, Ambassador of Japan to Samoa\*\***

**\*\*On the Occasion of His Majesty the Emperor's Birthday Reception\*\***

Lau Susuga i le Ta'ita'i o le Sauniga, Susuga Semikueva Fa'atoafe,  
Lau Afioga i le Ao Mamalu o le Mālō, Tuimalealiifano Va'aletoa Sualauvi II  
(*le lua*) ma lau Masiofo,  
Afifio Afioga i Sui Palemia ma Minisita o le Kapeneta,  
Afifio Afioga i Sui Mamalu o le Palemene,  
Afifio Afioga i Sui Mamalu o le Fa'amasinoga.  
Honourable members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Uo ma e masani,

Good evening, Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you all for joining us tonight to celebrate the auspicious occasion of His Majesty the Emperor's Birthday.

His Majesty Emperor Naruhito, born in 1960, celebrated his 66th birthday on February 23rd this year. It is a great honor to have you all here to commemorate this special day.

You just heard our national anthems played and sang beautifully by the artists from Solfa Music. As you might already know, Japan's national anthem is called Kimigayo. Its title roughly translates to "His Imperial Majesty's Reign"

Kimigayo is a little unique. One is about its size. It is notably one of the shortest national anthems. Its lyrics are also believed to be among the very oldest. It is in fact a Japanese poem from an ancient poetry anthology compiled in the 10th century.

The poem expresses a heartfelt wish for the longevity of His Majesty and the endurance of his reign. The long, peaceful passage of time, describe by an image of a lump of sandy clay turning into a solid stone covered with moss. In essence, it conveys a profound sentiment akin to the phrase, "Long live His Majesty the Emperor!" The current melody for Kimigayo was, by the way, adopted in the late 19th century.

While historically and literally talking about the longevity of an emperor, the anthem is now generally understood to be a kind of a prayer for the enduring peace and prosperity of Japan and its people, with His Majesty the Emperor serving as the unifying symbol of the state and the people.

Japan today, while honoring its long imperial tradition with a hereditary Emperor as the symbol of the state, is at its core a vibrant constitutional democracy. Even the Emperor's position is also rooted in the collective will of the people, as the constitution clearly states.

Democratic values permeate every corner of our society. Governments are formed based on the direct will of the people, as expressed through recent elections. Our citizens enjoy the freedom to express their opinions without fear of suppression by those in power. And the integrity of our political system is safeguarded by free press and social media, which act as crucial checks against corruption. This democratic foundation is something we deeply cherish and continuously strive to uphold.

Both Japan and Samoa are nations whose peoples share a common desire for peace, not just regionally, but globally.

Japan is a nation that earnestly seeks peace. Even when faced with differences of opinion with other countries, we consistently pursue resolution through dialogue, never through the display or use of force. We are a nation that maintains its pride and dignity, never succumbing to coercion from other powers, and never hesitating to speak out for what is right, thereby preserving our independence.

Samoa has notably chosen not to maintain a military. Yet, I firmly believe that the spirit of independence and self-reliance among the Samoan people is strong, as strong as, if not stronger than, that of the Japanese people. This shared ethos forms a powerful bond between our nations.

Relations between nations should always be founded on mutual respect. This includes respecting each other's culture and history, adhering to common rules, and cooperating to build a just and orderly world. Furthermore, regardless of a nation's size or military strength, the sovereignty of every independent state must be respected.

Japan has always endeavored to be a true friend to the Pacific Island countries, including Samoa, providing necessary cooperation whenever requested. It is our sincere desire to continue this approach in the years to come.

As you know, Japan and the Pacific Island countries have been holding leaders' summits every three years since 1997. These summit meetings, called PALM (Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting), are crucial platforms for leaders from Japan and 19 island countries and regions to discuss common issues.

Japan hopes to strengthen the PALM process through true partnership, and further enhance relations with Pacific Island countries, including Samoa, based on the principles of "mutual trust and respect."

Japan strongly supports the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, which was adopted by the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) countries in 2022. At PALM10, held in 2024, Japan announced The Pacific Climate Resilience Initiative, which focuses on strengthening disaster prevention, promoting decarbonization, and supporting the self-reliant efforts of island countries.

Here in Samoa, Japan has been actively cooperating with the Government to

reducing carbon emissions in the transport sector. And just yesterday, I had the pleasure of signing an Exchange of Note concerning provision of additional Automated Weather Observation Systems, which we hope will contribute to the disaster preparedness and early warning of extreme weather events, such as cyclones

We will also continue our assistance under our Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects, especially in the areas of health and education. In this regard, I am expecting to participate next week in a handover of one of the school renovation projects, in Aleipata.

Looking back into last year, Osaka, Japan, was the host of the World Expo 2025. We are delighted to report to you that Samoa had successfully participated in this Expo, showcasing its unique culture and charm to a global audience.

Japan and Samoa are not just distant nations; we are neighbors, sharing the vast Pacific Ocean. As its very name implies, "peace" must prevail in this ocean. It is essential for the people of Japan and all Pacific Island countries, including Samoa, that this ocean remains peaceful, stable, and open for all.

Furthermore, Japan and Samoa share a common worldview that multilateralism is an important pillar of national security. We have already cooperated closely in various multilateral forums such as the United Nations, and we are committed to continuing to work together with the people of Samoa to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

With this spirit of shared values and cooperation, I look forward to working even more closely with all of you to deepen our partnership and friendship in the coming year and beyond.

Thank you very much. Fa'afetai tele lava.