

Marshall Islands national day

Countries enjoy long-lasting, friendly relationship

Tom D. Kijiner
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF
THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

On the auspicious occasion of the 36th anniversary of the national day of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), I express on behalf of His Excellency President Christopher J. Loeak, the government and people of the RMI, our warmest *iakwe* to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, members of the Imperial household, His Excellency Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and the government and people of Japan.



This year highlights a very special milestone in the relationship between Japan and the Micronesian island nations with the recent visit of the Japanese Imperial Couple to the Republic of Palau in April. The visit to our region presents a powerful message to the people of Pacific island nations that Japan is committed more than ever to further strengthening the much-valued relationship that exists between our nations and peoples. The RMI was honored and humbled to have been part of this glorious occasion, a historic event that will live long in the hearts and minds of the peoples of the region. For that I wish to reiterate the gratitude of the government and the people of the RMI for the kind act.

In the 26 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the RMI and Japan, remarkable progress has been chronicled in our bilateral relationship, highlighted by various developments, including Japan's recent upgrading of its embassy in the RMI to a full-fledged embassy with an ambassadorial status. I have witnessed with pride and appreciation how bilateral cooperation between our two nations has strengthened and diversified throughout the years in numerous fields, including economic cooperation, fisheries and trade, environment and climate change, disaster relief and management, capacity building in different fields and cultural and youth exchanges, among others. Most notable is the socioeconomic assistance generously provided to our people in the form of official development assistance, mobilized for various projects ranging from the grass-roots level and outer island development programs to the construction of schools, roads, ships, hospitals and dispensaries all over the Marshall Islands, to name just a few.

The RMI remains indebted to Japan for being one of its major development partners and a source of encouragement not only to the RMI, but to all the other Pacific island nations, as well for advancement and progress. Through the Pacific Islands Forum and the PALM process,

we have realized tremendous development cooperation from Japan throughout the years. Notwithstanding all these positive results, we continue to seek progress for further constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation in all fields, including economic, cultural, environmental, educational and scientific initiatives. I firmly believe that we will successfully achieve our common objectives in all these areas through consistent exploration of new, mutually beneficial bilateral and multilateral initiatives and reliable collaboration at the regional and international level.

Over the three years I've been ambassador to Japan, I have noted with delight the increase in official visits and exchanges at all levels. It is an understatement to say that these mutual exchanges among our citizens are of great importance for both nations, for not only do they promote further positive dialogues between our two governments, but they deepen mutual understanding and respect between our peoples. I am confident that with time, the people at the municipal levels will also be able to further solidify these mutually beneficial exchanges and hopefully lead to the establishment of more concrete relationships at the local level through sister-city programs.

We are particularly pleased and grateful for the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) program operated by the

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which continues to dispatch Japanese volunteers to work and live among our people in the islands, experiencing first hand our culture and way of life. I fervently hope that more people-to-people exchange programs such as this will become available in the not too distant future.

In closing, I wish to highlight that the RMI has come a long way in terms of national progress since its independence in 1979. Although it has endured much as a nation due to many challenges unique to a small island nation, most especially climate change and other environmental and health issues particularly those resulting from the testing of nuclear weapons on our soil, it still aspires to become an evolving nation with a goal to be self-sustained and economically independent. Over the years, through our aggressive efforts to combat global warming and nuclear armament, we have strived to become a leader in the race to make the world a safer place. We have appealed and will continue to seek global support toward these two major issues most dear to our hearts.

We understand the magnitude of the work required for a small island to be successful in these endeavors, however, as long as we know that we are taking steps toward making the world a better and safer world to live in, we believe that no small effort is ever a waste. I

Countries must work together to save Pacific islands

Kazunori Tanaka
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-MARSHALL ISLANDS
PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE



I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the government and people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands on the occasion of the country's National Day.

My first visit to the island nation, which is slightly north of the equator in the Pacific Ocean, was in July 2008, and since 2009, I have served as the president of the Japan-Marshall Islands Parliamentary League.

In September 2013, I paid my second visit to the Marshall Islands, when the nation hosted the Pacific Ocean Islands Forum "Expert Panel on Climate Leadership," in the capital of Majuro, which was participated in by the leaders of 16 Oceanian countries.

I attended the forum as the then senior vice environment minister representing the government of Japan. At the forum, there were concrete and constructive discussions among ministers, international organizations and researchers on adapting to climate change and the promotion of renewable energy in Pacific islands. Also, I was privileged to have a meeting with Marshall Islands' President Christopher Loeak and see the situations and challenges the island nation is facing firsthand.

The relationship between our two nations is very deep, with Japan having been commissioned to govern the Marshall Islands for about 30 years until the end of World War II in 1945, and many Japanese emigrated there to make

the islands their second home.

In April, when Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko visited the Pacific island nation of Palau, which was a World War II battlefield along with the Marshall Islands and others, Loeak and his wife joined them in commemorating those who lost their lives during World War II by visiting monuments dedicated to Japanese and American soldiers.

In addition, the Marshall Islands and Japan have something unique in common in that both countries have experienced the effects of nuclear bombs. After dropping nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the U.S. conducted nuclear experiments on the Bikini and Enewetak atolls from 1946 to 1958.

However, the biggest and gravest concern facing the Marshall Islands is the danger of becoming submerged. The island nation is, on average, just 2 meters above sea level and even the highest areas sit at a meager 6 meters above sea level. Even waves slightly larger than those seen now will cause flooding at the airport. In addition, shore erosion has become a major issue, as there are now many areas that have become submerged. The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) warned in its assessment report that if the sea level rises 1 meter above current levels, there is a risk that 80 percent of the Majuro atoll will become submerged.

During my stay in the island nation, I enjoyed wading in the Marshall's blue sea, which boasts a beautiful azure color and clarity.

What can preserve the beauty of the islands of the Pacific are the responsible actions of those who live in developed countries. I believe this is an obligation we have as citizens of developed countries.

wish to invite the government and people of Japan and the international community to join and support our climate change and nuclear disarmament

initiatives for the sake of peace, security and for the future of humankind.

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the sponsors of this

year's May Day supplement and pray that the good Lord continues to bless you all. Long live the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Congratulations

to the Government and People of
the Republic of the Marshall Islands

on the 36th Anniversary of
Their Constitution

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Congratulations

and Best Wishes to the Government
and People of the Republic of the Marshall Islands
on the 36th Anniversary of Their Constitution

Kazunori Tanaka

President, Japan-Marshall Islands Parliamentary Friendship League
Former Senior Vice-Minister of Environment
Member of the House of Representatives

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