

# Fiji National Day

## United in moving our countries forward

Isikeli Uluinairai Mataitoga  
AMBASSADOR OF FIJI

On the occasion of the Republic of Fiji's 46th Anniversary of Independence, it is with great pleasure and honor, that I extend on behalf of H.E the President of the Republic of Fiji George Konrote, the government and people of Fiji, warm greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and members of the Imperial household. I also extend similar greetings to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the government and people of Japan, as well as all Fijians and friends of Fiji.



### Bilateral relations

Fiji is deeply grateful to Japan for the warm and cordial relations that have existed between our two countries since diplomatic relations were established 46 years ago. Despite our diversities in size and geographic disparity, both countries continue to enjoy fraternal relations through mutual cooperation in the fields of human resource and business development, education, sports, tourism, trade and culture.

Working together, the Fijian government and people are committed to deepen relations with Japan in the spirit of moving forward together with respect to advance bilateral interests, with regard to sustainable development and promoting stability and prosperity in both countries. In this respect, Fijians are delighted to enhance ties with Japan through high-level exchanges and engagement in important areas, including climate change, ocean and sea management, disaster risk reduction and investment.

### Japanese assistance

Japan remains one of Fiji's major development partners in the economic and social sectors. Japan's overseas development assistance program through the Japan International Cooperation

Agency (JICA) continues to provide valuable assistance in terms of human resource development, grass-roots human security programs focusing on environment related projects, climate change and disaster risk management in Fiji. An estimated 800 JICA experts and 670 Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers have worked in Fiji.

Following natural disasters, Japan has always been generous in providing assistance to Fiji. Early this year, after Winston, the worst-ever tropical cyclone, hit Fiji with a scale of devastation never experienced, Japan was among the countries that responded quickly. Every year, Japan provides an average of 15 to 20 scholarships for Fijian students to study in Japan. This year an additional 10 postgraduate scholarships were allocated with an emphasis on upskilling civil servants and educators, under a new cooperation program called the Pacific Leaders' Educational Assistance for Development of State. The program aims to foster our young leaders with regard to sustainable development and further strengthen our bilateral relationship.

### Economic cooperation

Fiji agrees with Japan that economic cooperation that is direct

ed at sustainable development, delivered through partnership with the private sector, is an effective way to address the concerns of both countries. In this respect, both governments, working with their private sectors, organized an Investment and Trade Seminar in Fiji last year. This culminated in the establishment of business ventures and subsequent cooperation between relevant agencies of the two countries.

We are grateful to Japan for its resolve to explore new ways to increase trade and economic cooperation, with apparent growing visibility of Fijian products such as water, wellness products and fish in the Japanese market. The volume of trade between the two countries continues to increase every year, growing by 11 percent on average in the last five years, with a total trade value of \$134 million in 2015. We expect our trading ties to grow in the coming years as statistics to June 2016 recorded increases in trade of fish, wood chips, manufactured goods, motor vehicles and car parts.

Fiji as a global tourist destination endeavours to strengthen tourism cooperation with Japan due to growing interest from ordinary Japanese to visit Fiji. Resumption of Fiji-Japan direct

flights within two years will boost this opportunity.

### Public diplomacy

Strengthening ties between the two countries through people-to-people exchanges have surged in recent years with increasing interest from regional Japan to establish sister school relations and sporting exchanges with Fiji. The phenomenal accomplishment of Fiji's first Olympic Gold in Rio in rugby has become an astounding flagship of the country's diplomacy on the international stage.

Additionally, education cooperation is also expanding. This growing trend of public diplomacy will further deepen bilateral ties between the friendly people of our countries in the years ahead.

### Global citizen

Our nation is a beautiful island of tranquillity amid worldwide upheavals and increased vulnerability to adverse weather events. We have a compassionate and resilient people of many races who have learned to live together over the years despite their differences. We aspire this attribute to continue as we strive to build our nation in every sense of unity and solidarity bilaterally and multilaterally, which is key to



Fiji's Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama (left) meets with U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the 71st Session of the U.N. General Assembly in New York in September. EMBASSY OF FIJI

sustainability.

Fiji's commitment to being a good global citizen is manifested through its ongoing engagement with the U.N. and the leading role it continues to play in advocating the voice of the smaller island states and least-developed nations in various world forums. This is being significantly attested to by its admirable accomplishment in securing the

Presidency of the 71st Session of the General Assembly. A milestone that clearly demonstrates our small nation's perseverance and determination in exercising its rights as an equal and sovereign member of the U.N., guided by the core values of its foreign policies of respect for each other's sovereignty, equality, fairness and transparency and support for the principles and

objectives of the U.N. Fiji's initial success as the chair of the Group of 77 & China in 2013 became a springboard to prove its potential on the global stage to help bring about equity, peace and stability.

Again at the 2016 Olympic Games, with its first gold medal achievement, Fiji proved to the world that regardless of size, economic disparities, the potential of every nation should be recognized in the theater of global affairs.

Fiji supports world peace and the peaceful resolution of all disputes between nations. In this regard, we provide international peacekeeping missions in trouble spots around the globe under the U.N. banner, as currently evident in our commitment to the UNDOF (United Nations Disengagement Observer Force) in the Golan Heights, Iraq, Lebanon and Sudan. Our servicemen and servicewomen have served with distinction in the U.N. missions and some have paid the ultimate price for their services. I pay spe-

cial tribute to them for their selfless sacrifice in pursuit of world peace.

As we celebrate today, we as a nation have every reason to be grateful to the Almighty God for His tender mercies that have enabled us to come thus far, a nation poised for greater things.

May I extend our sincere appreciation to the Japanese government and people for the steadfast development provision and cooperation, our corporate sponsors, the Japan-Fiji Friendship Society, members of the Fijian community and Fijians in Japan for their support and genuine commitment to the promotion of goodwill between Japan and Fiji.

Finally, my sincere gratitude to The Japan Times, whose generous support we have always received over the years and for allowing us this tremendous opportunity to celebrate Fiji's 46th anniversary of independence with its readers.

May God bless Fiji-Japan Relations.

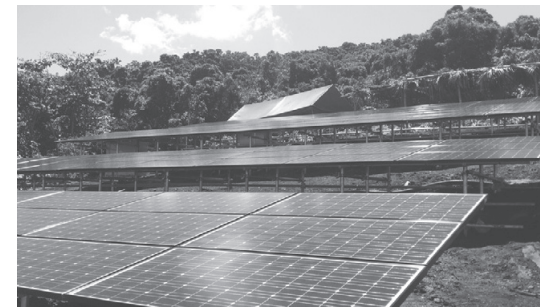
**Congratulations**  
to the People of the Republic of Fiji  
on the 46th Anniversary of Their Independence



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