

Fiji National Day

Developing with care and compassion for all

ISIKELI ULUINAIRAI MATAITOGA
AMBASSADOR OF FIJI



On the occasion of the Republic of Fiji's 47th 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 greetings to the government of Japan, the Honorable Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and people of this great nation. To all Fiji nationals and friends of Fiji, I extend warm greetings to you all.

Bilateral relations

The government and people of Fiji are deeply grateful to the government and people of

Japan for the warm and cordial relations that have existed between our two countries since diplomatic relations were established 47 years ago. Fiji continues to enjoy fraternal relations with Japan through cooperation exchanges in various areas, including human resource and business development, education, sports, tourism, trade and culture among others. Fiji is committed to deepening relations through high-level engagements, particularly in key areas focused on achieving the U.N.'s 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

People-to-people exchanges, one of the pillars of this cordial relationship, have surged in recent years, with increasing interest from rural Japan to establish sister-school relations and sports exchanges. The 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan has generated increased interest in many prefectural governments and cities, which have expressed their desire to be pre-tournament hosts to the Fijian Rugby Team. The increased interest also comes in light of Fiji's first-ever Olympic gold medal in Rio in rugby sevens that has become a flagship of the country's diplomacy on the international stage.

Sports exchanges are now taking place regularly. Coupled with the 2020 Olympics and the Japanese government's "Sport for the Future Program," this growing public diplomacy is expected to shape and deepen our bilateral ties in the years ahead.

Japanese assistance

Fiji expresses its deep gratitude for Japan's support through its development assistance over the last 47 years. Japan remains one of Fiji's major development partners, through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which continues to provide valuable assistance in human resource development and community empowerment projects related to the environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction. An estimated 1,560 JICA experts and volunteers have worked in Fiji, with 37 currently participating in various fields of technical cooperation.

Japan has always been a country that responds with urgency and generosity in the aftermath of natural disasters and this was no different following Fiji's experiencing its worst-ever tropical cyclone (Winston) in Feb-

ruary 2016.

On scholarships, Fiji is grateful to the government of Japan for providing an additional 10 to 17 postgraduate scholarships beginning in 2016. The new cooperation program — Pacific Leaders' Educational Assistance for Development of State — an outcome of the seventh Pacific Island Leaders Meeting summit in May 2015, aims to build capacity for our young leaders in the civil service.

COP 23 presidency

Fiji's commitment as 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. After providing the presidency for the 71st U.N. General Assembly, Fiji, through its Prime Minister, the Hon. Josaia V. Bainimarama, will now preside over the Conference of the Parties to U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, as president and chair of COP 23, which will take place in Bonn, Germany, in November.

The priorities of Fiji's COP 23 presidency



Hon. Prime Minister Josaia V. Bainimarama and U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres shake hands after a meeting on the sidelines of the 72nd Session of the U.N. General Assembly in New York in September. EMBASSY OF FIJI

include showcasing best practices for transformative climate action; mobilizing a grand coalition of climate action leadership (at every level of government, the private sector and the public), ensuring that benefits of action are shared with the vulnerable and marginalized, and strengthening the link between ocean health and climate. The Fiji presidency will adopt an inclusive and caring approach to all parties concerned and ensure that no one is left behind.

Appreciation

May I extend our sincere appreciation to the

government of Japan and its people for their steadfast cooperation, our corporate sponsors, the Japan-Fiji Friendship Society, friends of Fiji in Japan and members of the Fijian community 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 47th anniversary of independence with its readers.

May God bless Fiji-Japan relations.



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Congratulations

to the People of
the Republic of Fiji on the
47th Anniversary
of Their Independence



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