

Recommendations by the Eminent Person's Committee for PALM7

Preface

The PALM has been held triennially since 1997. The Seventh Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM7) will be held in Iwaki city, Fukushima prefecture in May 2015.

For the last 18 years since the inception of the PALM, as international environments surrounding Japan and the Pacific island countries (PICs) have transformed, the role of the PALM has significantly changed from the one at the initial stage. The PALM has succeeded in maintaining and developing the mutual trust between Japan and the PICs and contributed to the enhancement of Japan's diplomatic presence in the Pacific region.

It is necessary for Japan to work towards further elevating the relationship with the PICs. This is because several other countries have also tried to develop the relationship with the PICs against the backdrop of the increase of the PICs presence in the international community surrounding the Pacific. It is, therefore, recommended that Japan make efforts seamlessly appropriate for the changing situation to prevent the relationship with the PICs from weakening and collapsing.

Recently, China has enhanced its influence in the Pacific island region and insisted on several rights over the ocean. Such Chinese movements seem to challenge the established order in the Pacific region. In addition, we have faced several challenges, such as the weathering of historical relationship between Japan and the PICs due to the aging of pro-Japanese people in the Micronesia, in promoting an active diplomacy towards the PICs.

It is recommended that Japan review continuously the diplomatic policy towards the PICs and the form of the PALM in accordance with the changing global environments, and hold PALM7 with a clear diplomatic policy towards the PICs.

With these perspectives, the meetings of the Eminent Person's Committee for PALM7 were held on 21 May, 9 June, 12 September, 15 October and 26 November 2014. The Committee made this set of recommendations based on the discussions on the following topics:

- (1) Evaluation of the previous PALMs;
- (2) Purpose of strengthening of the relationship with the PICs;
- (3) Key areas of PALM7 and effective utilization of ODA;
- (4) Review of the PALM process.

It is meaningful that the Eminent Person's Committee was established early. This is because some ideas and recommendations indicated in the meetings have been already reflected and implemented in the preparation and relevant projects of PALM7.

It is noteworthy that these recommendations could be submitted six months prior to PALM7. It is hoped that they will be widely utilized in PALM7 and contribute to the success of the summit.

Recommendations

1. Japan's New Diplomatic Policy towards the PICs

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's "Diplomacy taking a panoramic perspective of the world map" has realized his official visits to New Zealand (NZ), Australia and Papua New Guinea (PNG) in July 2014. It was the first time in 29 years that a Prime Minister of Japan has visited a Pacific island country since the visit by Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone to PNG and Fiji in 1985.

The visit by Prime Minister Abe to the Pacific region contributed to increasing Japanese public interests in the PICs, enhancing Japanese presence in the PICs and raising their expectations towards Japan. It is very timely to hold PALM7 in such environment. Taking advantage of this greatest opportunity, it is recommended that Japan announce its new diplomatic policy towards the PICs and express its strong will to further deepen the relationship with the PICs.

(1) PALM7 for a Seafaring Country, Japan

It is significant to explain the importance of strengthening the relationship between Japan and the PICs and recognize the PALM as the starting point for the purpose in line with Prime Minister Abe's policies aiming for "Development of Japan as a seafaring country". Therefore, it is recommended that Prime Minister Abe present Japan's clear policies about exploitation of marine resources, shared use of ocean and security of the Pacific island region in PALM7.

(2) Prospects of the PALM

It is recommended that Prime Minister Abe explain Japan's policy describing future directions of the PALM taking into account the achievements thus far. Will the PALMs be held continuously as a mere triennial event? Or will Japan seek to develop the PALM into a regional consultative framework with the purpose of expanding the cooperation between Japan and the PICs?

If the PALM will be held continuously without indicating its future directions, the PICs will find it difficult to provide themselves with motivation to participate in the PALM. Even worse, the PALM may be recognized just as a meeting for distributing Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) of which the amount will be the main interests for the PICs. Consequently, there is a possibility that Japanese centripetal force will be reduced.

(3) Review of Japan's Diplomacy towards the PIF

Japan has recognized the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) as a significant object for the diplomacy towards the Pacific region. However, the structure in the Pacific where the PICs are integrated under the PIF has gradually collapsed. For example, Fiji, which was an advocate of the establishment of the PIF, has established the Pacific Island Development Forum (PIDF). The PIDF is an international organization consisting only of the PICs with the exclusion of Australia and NZ from its membership while Fiji has not showed its intention to rejoin the PIF so far. Therefore, it is necessary for Japan to cautiously observe the future development in the Pacific region and then consider the future relationship with the regional organizations such as the PIF.

These three points noted above will also be referred to in the next section, the PALM process, since they are directly related to the PALM that embodies the Japan's diplomacy towards the PICs.

2. PALM Process

(1) Venue and Frequency

- ① The holding of the PALM in Japan has significance: 1) appealing to the PICs' leaders the benefit of strengthening the relationship with Japan through showing directly Japan's assets such as advanced technology and traditional culture, and 2) raising awareness of Japanese people about the PICs and the significance of diplomacy towards the Pacific region. It is, therefore, recommended to hold the PALM in Japan in principle.
- ② However, a Pacific island country has been interested in hosting the PALM. This indicates that the PICs' attitude towards our traditional relationship, that is the donor-recipient relationship, has changed. It would be recognized as a welcome indication.
- ③ There will be some difficulties to have the PALM in the PICs. On the other hand, it would be reasonable to consider holding a PALM Ministerial Interim Meeting (PALM-MIM) in the PICs.

It is also worth considering a mechanism, separately from the PALM, under which a Japanese Prime Minister and Foreign Minister will visit the PICs regularly.

- ④ The current PALM's framework that holds a summit triennially and a Ministerial Interim Meeting in the following year is appropriate.
- ⑤ It is hoped that a host city of the PALM will be decided at least by two years before the next PALM in consideration of the budget process of local governments.

(2) Co-chair

It has been a practice that the chair of the PIF serves as a co-chair of the PALM since PALM2. In PALM6 (held in 2012 when the PIF chair was NZ), Cook Island, a pacific island country, served as a co-chair instead of NZ. In PALM7, Palau, which was a co-chair in PALM2, will serve as a co-chair again. If this practice continues, there might be countries that have no chance to be a co-chair, on the other hand, there might be countries that could serve as a co-chair more than twice.

To address these problems, it is necessary to establish the following rule: 1) a co-chair will be appointed from the PICs, and 2) a co-chair will be appointed from the PICs that have not served as a co-chair in the previous PALMs.

(3) Position of Australia and NZ and Participation of the United States (US)

- ① The PALM has been held as “a venue for dialogue between the leaders of Japan and the PICs”. However, Japan has invited all the PIF member countries including Australia and NZ to the PALM from the beginning. We understand that there are various opinions among the PICs on the participation of Australia and NZ in the PALM. However, the cooperation with these two countries is important for Japan, especially for providing assistance to the PICs in an effective manner.

Japan should explain that Australia and NZ are development partners working for the PICs in cooperation with Japan, and the participation of Australia and NZ in the PALM will benefit the PICs.

- ② Participation of the US as an observer in PALM6 raised awareness of Japanese public about the PALM, however, the PICs were not necessarily positive about the US's participation. This was mainly because Japan's intention on the US's participation in PALM6 was not sufficiently conveyed to the PICs.

Participation of the US as well as Australia and NZ in the PALM has a certain significance. In case that Japan invites the US to PALM7, it is important for Japan to carefully explain its intention to the PICs and then obtain an understanding from the PICs.

- ③ It is necessary to clarify that the PALM is a venue for dialogue between Japan and the PICs. There is an idea to have a sectional meeting in the PALM among donor countries including Japan, Australia, NZ and the US. Participation of international organizations such as the Asia Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in such a sectional meeting will create real added value to the PALM.

(4) Membership of the PIF

In PALM-MIM2 in October 2013, Ministers reaffirmed Japan's deeper and wider engagement with the PIF as an Island Country sharing the Pacific Ocean, and recommended that this matter be considered further, including examination of options available for Japan's possible membership of the PIF. However, there has been no consensus about Japan's membership of the PIF among the PIF members. In the 26th PIF Post-Forum Dialogue at Palau in August 2014, the representative of Japanese delegation stated that Japan would promote strengthening of partnership with the PIF members, but he did not refer to Japan's membership of the PIF.

- ① It is recommended to express Japan's intention about the membership of the PIF and not to let this matter take its own course. At least, it is necessary to clarify Japan's current stance to the PICs that have been supporting for Japan and worked towards its realization.
- ② The Eminent Person's Committee expressed the following two opinions of Japan's membership of the PIF.

- Opposition

Becoming a member of the PIF does not benefit Japan. There are several emerging regional or sub-regional organizations such as the PIDF that was recently established and the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) in the Pacific region. It is necessary to assess the future development of these organizations. The decision of becoming a member of the PIF without careful analysis may undermine Japan's diplomacy towards the PICs.

- Support with conditions

Japan could have an option of changing its diplomatic policy by becoming a

member of the PIF and considering the regional issues from the same perspective of the PICs. There is a certain significance for Japan to become a member of the PIF from such point of view.

However, there are some challenges to be considered. Will the membership of the PIF be consistent with the current PALM framework? Will Prime Minister of Japan be able to participate in the PIF annual meeting?

(5) Future Direction of the PALM

① Relationship between the PALM and the PIF

Japan's diplomacy towards the PICs has been conducted on the basis of the idea that it is reasonable and effective to utilize the PIF. Therefore, the PICs as well as Australia, NZ and the PIF Secretariat have participated in the PALM since PALM1.

As the relationship between Japan and the PICs has been developing and the cooperation based on bilateral relationship or under other frameworks has expanded, the role of the PIF has been changing in Japan's diplomacy towards the PICs. Moreover, the PIDF as the second regional organization has emerged in the Pacific region.

Therefore, it is time to review the relationship between the PALM and the PIF.

(Reference Information)

The official name of the PALM was "Japan-Pacific Islands Forum Summit Meeting" from PALM1 to PALM5. In PALM6 in 2012, "Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting" was adopted as the official name of the summits.

② Future Direction of the PALM

The PALM might possibly be stuck in a rut. It is time to seriously consider the future direction of the PALM, and then rediscover the significance of the PALM. In the situation that China, Republic of Korea, France and some other countries also hold summits with the PICs leaders, Japan has to distinguish the PALM from other summits.

(i) It is recommended to consider the PALM not as a mere triennial event but as a regional consultative framework of Japan-Pacific islands leaders meeting. Under this framework, Japan will be able to organize additional opportunities for meetings by the leaders and Ministers between Japan and the PICs in addition to a triennial summit. It is also valuable to consider creating opportunities for exchanges between Diet Members in Japan and the PICs.

In this sense, the Japan-Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting held in the margin of the

United Nations General Assembly in September 2014 was a good approach. The establishment of Parliamentary Friendship Leagues for each PIC or the Pacific Island region is also worth noting.

(ii) It is necessary to set “a future goal of the PALM” shared by Japan and the PICs if Japan has an intention to continue the PALM. This would lead to a breakout of a rut.

3. Priority Areas of Cooperation and Future Direction of Japan’s Assistance

(1) PALM6 focused on the five areas to enhance cooperation: 1) Response to Natural Disasters, 2) Environment and Climate Change, 3) Sustainable Development and Human Security, 4) People-to-People Exchanges, 5) Maritime Issues. Although these issues still remain critical challenges, it is recommended to focus on the following four areas in PALM7.

① Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change

It is the most important issue for the PICs to overcome vulnerabilities to natural disasters and climate change. Therefore, it is required to continuously provide assistance to this area. As the number of natural disasters caused by climate change has increased, natural disasters and climate change should not be addressed separately.

PALM7 will be held in Iwaki city, Fukushima prefecture, affected area of the Great East Japan Earthquake. It is recommended to discuss disaster risk reduction based on the lessons learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake.

(i) It is significant to utilize Japan’s policies for disaster risk reduction and reconstruction as well as “Abenomics” for the PICs’ sustainable development and quality growth. In developing social and economic infrastructure which has remained a critical issue for the PICs, it is desirable to provide assistance with emphasis on resilience to natural disasters.

(ii) There is an idea that projects implemented through ODA in the past will be rehabilitated by providing resilience to natural disasters. This kind of assistance could be considered as Japan’s distinctive style, and it will be highly appreciated.

(iii) Due to the geographical characteristics of the PICs, it is significant to develop assistance programmes on a regional scale.

② People-to-People Exchanges and Human Resource Development

The environment surrounding the Pacific region has been gradually changing as observed in the aging of pro-Japan people. It is urgently necessary to cultivate young pro-Japan people in order to maintain and develop the relationship of trust between Japan and the PICs.

Towards the self-reliant and sustainable development of the PICs, the fostering of human resources is required. It is certain that Japanese knowledge and technology are useful for human resource development in the PICs. Also, this can be assistance specific to Japan and differentiated from expanding assistance by other donors such as China.

The significance of assistance towards human resource development by using Japanese knowledge and technology has been frequently pointed out. However, unfortunately, in some cases, this kind of assistance has not been implemented. The following projects can be presented as key projects.

- (i) i. Long-term training for promising PICs administrative officials (it is hoped that a scheme will materialize with a two-year training in a university as well as one-year internship in a local government which will contribute to the establishment and development of the partnership between the PICs and local governments in Japan.)
 - ii. Establishment of a quota system for overseas students from the PICs
 - iii. Increase of opportunities for scholars in universities and research institutes in Japan and the PICs to visit and conduct exchanges with each other
 - iv. Assistance for expansion of a private-sector-led invitation
 - v. Assistance for development of economic relationship under the cooperation with related organizations such as the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO)

It is also necessary to establish a framework to prevent these projects from being temporary ones.

(ii) The PICs have an increased need for knowledge and human resources for development of good governance, such as the improvement of administrative and legal systems. It is, therefore, recommended that the Japanese central government actively support its local governments and the PICs for developing partnership.

(iii) Visiting programs from the PICs to Japan have been implemented normally with the purpose of “promotion of the PICs’ understanding of the current situation in Japan”. However, under the principle of equal partnership, it is significant to provide the PICs

with opportunities to introduce their cultures in Japan. It is recommended to organize cultural exchange projects such as the invitation of the PICs' folklore groups to Pacific-related events in Japan.

③ Maritime Issues

In the 45th Pacific Islands Forum in 2014, maritime issues were discussed as one of the main themes. Recently, overfishing and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing have been acknowledged as problems. It is significant for Japan, as a country depending on fishing resources in this region, to recognize these problems as challenges to be addressed on a priority basis.

It is recommended that Japan, a seafaring country, contribute to the protection of regional maritime order. For example, it is useful to dispatch experts of legal systems related to ocean management and development to the PICs suffering from vulnerable administrative control and flaws in laws. The strengthening of cooperative relationship between Japan and the PICs in this area will contribute to the development of the PICs' ability of ocean management as well as the promotion of the PICs' understanding of Japan's policies.

④ Economic Exchanges

Most of the PICs leaders have aimed at the development of their economy and industries. Therefore, they have been seeking opportunities to contact with Japanese private companies as actual players of business activities. It is, therefore, significant for Japan to create opportunities for exchanges between the PICs' leaders and Japanese business and industrial communities in PALM7. In PALM6, the meeting between the PICs' leaders and leaders of Japanese business communities was held, and was appreciated by the PICs. It is hoped that a similar meeting will be organized with the cooperation of related organizations such as JETRO in PALM7.

It is recommended to constantly take advantage of the Pacific Islands Centre (PIC), established in Tokyo with the purpose of the promotion of trade, investment and tourism, and JETRO towards the development of economic exchange projects.

After PALM6, the strengthening of technical cooperation between Okinawa and the PICs has gradually achieved certain results. It is necessary to continue implementing this kind of cooperation projects between the PICs and Japan's private sector in following summits.

(2) Future Direction of Japan's Assistance

Since PALM4, in which Japan announced the total amount of assistance provided during the next three years, the amount has been undeniably the PICs' top concern in the PALM. The continuation of such situation is unfortunate for the relationship between Japan and the PICs. This is also different from the original purpose of the PALM.

It is also significant to review contents of Japan's assistance in accordance with a new direction of Japan's diplomacy towards the PICs. It is necessary for Japan to focus on improvement of assistance with skill and knowledge acquired, through such programmes as the human resource development assistance. Improving assistance will contribute to the increase in awareness of Japan's presence in the Pacific region.

It is necessary to fully understand the actual situation of recipient countries and regions and to carefully consider feasibility, benefits and results of projects for project formulation.

It is also significant to make it clear that the PALM is based on the idea of equal partnership. In addition to the announcement of assistance by Japan, it is hoped that the PICs will make a certain commitment to Japan in the PALM. It is recommended to utilize the MIM as a forum for a substantive dialogue.

4. Others

(1) The 70th Anniversary of the End of War

In the PICs, the bloodiest battlefields of World War II, many remains of the Japanese war dead have been left. It is hoped that the strengthening of the cooperation between Japan and the PICs for recovery of the remains of the war dead will be indicated in PALM7 held in the year of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II.

If the theme of the 70th Anniversary is discussed in PALM7, the summit will be able to attract a great deal of Japanese public attention.

Since each 10 year anniversary of the end of the war comes decade by decade and the PALM is held triennially, the next opportunity that these two events come in the same year will be the year of 2045, the 100th Anniversary of the end of World War II. It is significant to make PALM7 a memorial event which leads up to the 100th Anniversary.

(2) Participation of Fiji in PALM7

Fiji held a general election in September 2014. The participation of Fiji's Prime Minister in PALM7 is of great significance. It is not clear at the moment whether Fiji will return to the PIF or not. However, it is essential that Japan will ensure the participation of Fiji's Prime Minister in PALM7, regardless of whether or not Fiji will

return to the PIF. The participation of Fiji's Prime Minister in PALM7 will provide an opportunity to indicate that the PALM is not a summit between Japan and the PIF countries but a summit between Japan and the PICs.

(Reference Information)

Military coup occurred in Fiji in December 2006. Due to the coup, Japan did not invite Fiji's Prime Minister to PALM5, and Ambassador of Fiji to Japan participated in PALM5. In PALM6, Japan invited Fiji's Foreign Minister instead of its Prime Minister; however, Foreign Minister as well as Ambassador of Fiji to Japan did not participate in the summit.

(3) Interaction with People in a Host City

In the Young PALM (a high school student version of the PALM) held in Okinawa in PALM6, high school students in Japan and the PICs discussed environmental issues and submitted the recommendations to the leaders of Japan and the PICs. The holding of the Young PALM succeeded in urging people in a host city to interact with people from the PICs and in creating opportunities to foster mutual understandings and friendly relations between the participants. It is meaningful that people in a host city and young generation engage in the PALM. It is hoped that events to urge the interaction between people in a host city and the PICs will be organized in PALM7.

(4) Public Relations

The PALM held in Japan provides opportunities to promote public understanding of the PICs and Japan's diplomatic policy towards the PICs. It is recommended to develop public relations activities in cooperation with Fukushima prefecture, Iwaki city, business communities, NGOs, and media for the success of PALM7.

- ① Since PALM7 will be held in Iwaki city, Fukushima prefecture, it is recommended to appoint the Hula-girls of the Spa Resort Hawaiians as a PR and Goodwill Ambassador of PALM7. Public relations activities relating to PALM7 by the Hula-girls will also contribute to the increase of public attention to the affected areas' recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake.
- ② One of the reasons why the PALM is held in a local city is to raise awareness and supports of a host city government and people towards the PALM. In MIM2 in October 2013, Japan announced that PALM7 would be commonly called "Iwaki

Pacific Islands Summit 2015”); however, it is recommended to refer to Fukushima as well as Iwaki to promote a broader attention and supports by its people towards PALM7.

- ③ On some internet websites, descriptions that Fukushima is still in danger of radiation contamination, and that there is a high risk with participating in PALM7 in Iwaki city, Fukushima prefecture have been observed. It is necessary for Japan to acknowledge the existence of these rumors and to frequently appeal safety of Iwaki city in order to prevent the leaders of the PICs from being affected by such rumors.

(End)