

**Statement by Mr. Iwao HORII,
Special Envoy of the Prime Minister
and Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan,
at PIF Forum Dialogue Partners Session
7th September, 2017 at Apia, Independent State of Samoa**

Prime Minister Tuilaepa,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to begin by extending my deep appreciation for giving me this opportunity to take the floor at this important forum. I would also like to pay tribute to the strong leadership of the chair, Prime Minister Tuilaepa, upon organizing this meeting.

Rich, serene and open Pacific Ocean has always been the very foundation of peace and prosperity of the entire region. This was made possible by the rule of law at sea, a hard-won wisdom that ensures free and fair order for all. No other country has benefited more from this vast ocean than Japan or the Pacific island countries.

Yet, this ocean is increasingly being threatened by challenges from many fronts from large-scale degradation of marine environment to illegal fishing that slips through law enforcement; all of which will have an enduring impact to the region. In this regard, Japan welcomes the PIF's efforts to address the issue of regional ocean governance.

As an island state that has strong historic ties with the Pacific island countries, Japan is determined to work hand-in-hand with our partners in order to maintain a free, open and rules-based maritime order, and to achieve sustainable use of marine resources, as our policy priorities in the region.

In particular, Japan will focus its efforts on three fronts, all of which are closely interconnected;

- (a) Consolidating rules-based maritime order and assisting capacity building on maritime security and safety to enhance law enforcement.
- (b) A sustainable use of marine resources.
- (c) The maintenance and conservation of marine environment.

In pursuing these efforts, we will be mindful of the goal of achieving sustainable development of the Pacific island countries, as well as the SDG 14 and the outcomes of the United Nation Ocean Conference.

Next May, we will host the 8th Pacific Islands Leader Meeting and Japan is committed to seize this opportunity. We will spare no effort to mobilize every policy tool at our disposal to make an important stride along these lines of efforts. And, in doing so, we will not fail to heed the voices and the needs of the Pacific islands countries as our long standing partners.

Our common futures are inseparably tied with the future of the ocean that we cherish, and we have every reason to work together to preserve a rich, open and sustainable ocean for generations to come. We are looking forward to working with our partners to advance this important cause.

Thank you.