

3 Oceania

Japan and the Pacific Island countries are long-standing friends connected by the Pacific Ocean and also share deep historical ties. In addition, with vast Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ),¹² these countries are key to maritime transport activities and provide essential fishing grounds for Japan's bonito and tuna fisheries. Furthermore, the peace and stability of this region is directly linked to the peace and stability of Japan as a neighboring country in the Pacific.

The sustainable development of the Pacific Island countries, which share such a relationship with Japan, is important. Over many years, Japan has advanced cooperation through bilateral efforts and the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM) process, building relationships of trust with these countries.

Japan's Efforts

Pacific Island countries face common vulnerabilities unique to small island countries, such as small-scale economies dependent on specific industries, territories dispersed over a vast ocean, difficult access to international markets, and vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

Recognizing that the sustainable development of the Pacific Island countries requires not only cooperation to overcome the socio-economic challenges of each country stemming from these vulnerabilities, but also collective engagement with the whole region, Japan has been hosting PALM, a summit meeting between Japan and Pacific Island countries, every three years since 1997.

Pacific Island countries and regions draw upon their unity as members of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF),¹³ a regional cooperation framework. In 2022, the PIF unveiled "The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent (2050 Strategy)," which presents a vision and strategic pathways for the political, economic, social, and other development in the Pacific Islands region to be achieved by 2050. Japan has consistently expressed strong support for the Strategy.

In PALM10, held in Tokyo in July 2024, Japan and the Pacific Island countries and regions outlined specific initiatives in the seven priority areas¹⁴ of PIF's 2050 Strategy, with a view to building a partnership that advances together toward the future while addressing common challenges. Based on this Joint Action Plan, Japan has been steadily implementing these initiatives.



A Fukuoka City official conducting training on water pipe connections as part of the Project for Capacity Development of Non-Revenue Water Reduction in Fiji (Photo: JICA)

With a view to strengthening "Technology and Connectivity" in the digital sphere, Japan has been working together with the United States and Australia since 2021 on the installation of an undersea cable in East Micronesia. In this project, Japan signed and exchanged notes with Kiribati and Nauru on grants in June 2023, initiating support for the submarine cable installation. Japan also signed agreements on additional grants with Kiribati in June 2024 and with Nauru in July 2024. In March 2025, Japan signed and exchanged notes on a grant to support the establishment of a cable landing station in the Federated States of Micronesia. Steady progress continues, with cable landing ceremonies for this project held in Kiribati, Nauru, and the Federated States of Micronesia between July and September.

In 2025, Japan decided to support the expansion and renovation of the international passenger terminal building at Fua'amotu International Airport in Tonga. Tonga is comprised of approximately 170 islands, and air routes play an important role in people's daily lives. The project is expected to strengthen connectivity in the country and the region as well as enhance its industrial base.

The Pacific Island countries are a region vulnerable to climate change and at high risk of natural disasters, sharing common challenges with disaster-prone Japan. Cooperating to enhance the sophistication of meteorological and natural disaster information analysis in the Pacific region and to strengthen information-

¹² Maritime zones where a sovereign country has certain economic rights that can be established outside its territorial waters.

¹³ As of November 2025, the PIF is comprised of 16 member countries and two territories, including Australia, the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

¹⁴ (1) Political Leadership and Regionalism, (2) People-Centered Development, (3) Peace and Security, (4) Resources and Economic Development, (5) Climate Change and Disasters, (6) Ocean and Environment, (7) Technology and Connectivity.

sharing frameworks, leveraging Japan's strengths in disaster risk reduction technology and knowledge, not only reduces disaster risks in the Oceania region but also benefits Japan by reducing its own disaster risks, ensuring smooth navigation for vessels on important sea lanes, and contributing to the safe operation of Japanese fishing vessels in the region. Moreover, the smooth implementation of various projects by Japan's relevant research institutions in this region, including the investigation and analysis of climate change and its impacts, the conservation and restoration of marine environments, and the sustainable use of fisheries resources, also contributes to enhancing Japan's own problem-solving capabilities. In March 2025, Japan and Fiji signed and exchanged notes on cooperation to develop the training center, instrumentation center, and disaster prevention and awareness exhibition facilities of the Fiji Meteorological Service, which serves as a core hub in the meteorological field for the Pacific Island region, as part of the Co-creation for Common Agenda Initiative aimed at jointly addressing challenges with developing countries. In addition, in May of the same year, Japan and Fiji signed and exchanged notes on cooperation to provide a large vessel (disaster response vessel) in order to strengthen emergency response capabilities, such as lifesaving operations, when natural disasters such as cyclones occur in the country, which consists of approximately 110 inhabited islands.

The sustainable management of the ocean and environment in the Pacific region is a common challenge for Japan and the Pacific Island countries, both of which regard marine resources as an indispensable asset. They work together particularly in areas such as monitoring and sustainable use of fisheries and marine resources, capacity building and provision of equipment in the fields of maritime security and safety, waste management and pollution reduction, countermeasures against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and conservation of the Pacific's biodiversity environment and resources.

To enhance the capacity of individual countries in this field, Japan is providing patrol boats to Nauru, supporting the establishment of the "Fisheries Research Center" at Solomon Islands National University, and cooperating with Papua New Guinea on the development of the field training facilities and training vessels at the National Fisheries College. Japan has also been supporting sustainable development by providing fishery research and monitoring vessels and fisheries-related equipment to Vanuatu, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia for the sustainable monitoring of changes in fisheries resource stocks and distribution.



Then Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Ikuina inspecting the Majuro Bridge, built with Japan's cooperation in 1983, during her visit to the Marshall Islands in May 2025

People-to-people exchange and human resource development are indispensable for further strengthening the "Kizuna" between Japan and the Pacific Island countries. For more than 50 years, more than 4,000 Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers have been dispatched to the Pacific region. They have lived alongside the people of the Pacific, contributing to social improvement in a wide range of fields such as education, health, construction, environment, IT, sports, and culture, and have dedicated themselves to the development of those countries. Japan also promotes people-to-people exchange programs, including the youth invitation and dispatch program through JENESYS ¹⁵ and the MEXT Scholarship Program, so that young people from Pacific Island countries and regions can deepen their understanding of Japan and become bridges of friendship for the future.

Through these various initiatives, Japan will work together with the Pacific Island countries toward building a resilient, stable, and prosperous region.



Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Shimada (first from left) inspecting Vanuatu National Hospital, whose construction and maintenance were supported by Japan, during his visit to Vanuatu in January 2026

¹⁵ People-to-people exchange between Japan and the Asia-Oceania region. Acronym for Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths.