

**“A Beacon for Diplomacy toward PICs:
Working to Establish a Society of Pacific Citizens”**

Keynote Speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during the Opening Session
of the Seventh Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM7)

May 23, 2015 Iwaki, Fukushima

[Provisional translation]

Your Excellency Mr. Remengesau, President of the Republic of Palau and Joint Chair of PALM7,

Excellencies, distinguished national representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to PALM7.

Long gone are the days when the ocean connecting us was so vast that we had to lament the distances between us. Now is an age in which we both cultivate and celebrate our common identity as Pacific citizens.

It is some 9,000 kilometers from Tokyo to San Diego in the U.S. From Tokyo to Niue, which we in Japan gladly recognized as a state recently, it is 8,000, demonstrative that we are not actually remote from each other. Let us always reaffirm our view that we are not far from each other but close by, shall we not?

The Pacific Ocean is the biggest and most valuable common goods bestowed upon humankind. Common among us is our psyche with which we sometimes stand in awe of, and all the time in respect toward the great ocean. That stimulates our mutual cooperation and serves as the foundation supporting our friendship. It is the beacon illuminating the way to the future.

A Japanese poet quite some years ago penned a poem about a coconut that washes up onto the shores of Japan from a faraway island in the Pacific. A verse tells of “musing upon the millions of waves folding between us.” I am of a belief that by musing over each other across those folds of tide we will be able to grow an awareness that we are Pacific citizens and are on the same boat.

In order for us to face up to the fury of nature and also recover even better from disasters, we must bring to each other our wisdom and experiences while maintaining connections in which we help each other out at any time. What will help us achieve this goal

well is a community committed to the equality of all before the law, which places importance on democracy and has great regard for the human rights of each individual.

What we should have are two-way relations that are as level as the horizon itself and entirely free of threats using force or coercion. That is the order for a society of Pacific citizens.

Let us solidify our commitment. It is a commitment to make our ocean a sea that is both pacific and prosperous and a place that brings a promising future to each and every person living there.

Your countries have always warmly welcomed Japanese visiting to collect the remains of fallen soldiers. And we also know that you could testify on our behalf regarding the path Japan has untiringly carved out over 70 years, invariably with great regard for peace.

A great number of souls waiting to return to their homeland still linger there on islands in the Pacific. Please continue to lend your support to us in the future during our trips to search for soldiers' remains. I believe that our pledge to proactively work to bring peace to the world, based in international cooperation and created atop the path we have walked these 70 years, will continue to be received with the same warm geniality you have extended to us until now.

Guadalcanal becoming well-known for its gold mining leaves us with a sense of delighted surprise. However, we are moved to solemn contemplation, knowing that it has become an island struggling to harmonize development with nature. This is because the worries bedeviling the Solomon Islands are a kind of adversity that we in the Pacific hold in common.

As a pledge of the Japanese government, we will provide no less than 55 billion yen to you in the upcoming three years until the year we hold PALM8 in order to foster resilient capabilities that will not be defeated by climate change or disasters. We will also push forward in two-way exchanges and training of human resources to serve as assistance in cultivating both expertise and technical skills. We anticipate that this will be at a scale of roughly 4,000 people. We pledge to step up our efforts so that Pacific Island nations are able to fully utilize the Green Climate Fund.

I wish to ask you to give particular consideration to Japan's fishing activities, and I am of a belief that assistance to improve your coast guard and your ability to protect your own resources is a responsibility that Japan should shoulder.

In order for our innumerable islands to leave as an inheritance to future generations the diversity of the cultures we each developed and our natural diversity, what is the pathway to growth that we should choose?

Our “To Do” list is long indeed. I expect we will be able to discuss that in the meetings to follow. One is that Japan is now working to boost momentum towards reforming the United Nations. I would like very much to ask for your understanding and cooperation in this area.

More than anything, it is important for us to meet frequently. We who share in common both the potential and the issues that the sea brings should meet recurrently, taking every opportunity. I am looking forward to being able to meet you, the leaders of island nations, again this autumn on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly.

We have taken “Commitment to the Pacific from Iwaki, Fukushima: Building a Prosperous Future Together” as the slogan for PALM7.

This is in gratitude for the kindness you so thoughtfully extended to us four years ago, when this area was hit by a disaster. It is also because we very much wanted you to see for yourselves the all-out efforts that the people in the disaster areas have been making towards reconstruction.

We will send out to all our friends around the Pacific one commitment from Japan, a northwest Pacific island nation, from the city of Iwaki, now in the process of robust revitalization after suffering through earthquakes, tsunamis, and a nuclear accident.

Japan will spare no efforts in making our society of Pacific citizens into a community brimming with resilience and potential. I intend to join hands with all people who are friends of the sea, fostering trust and friendship within that community to make the Pacific Ocean an ocean of peace and prosperity. I will end my remarks here with my conviction that this meeting will end in success.

Thank you very much.