

**Statement by the Prime Minister  
at 8th Polynesian Leaders' Group Meeting**

Prime Minister Sopoaga,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to extend my congratulations upon holding the Eighth Polynesian leaders' Group Meeting. Let me also pay my heartfelt tribute to the efforts made by the Polynesian leaders' group, through which countries seek to effectively address various challenges facing the region by standing united and demonstrating a strong ownership for its own future.

I would like to express my gratitude to the invitation to this meeting, which I have received at the Eighth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM8) held in May. We, Japan and the Polynesian countries are historical partners who have been benefiting from the rich bounties of the Pacific Ocean together. Japan has decided to send the ambassador to Tuvalu, Mr. Omura, to this meeting for the first time as the representative of Japan in order to exchange views on various regional issues such as climate change, oceans, natural hazards and illegal fishing, and to further strengthen our bond with all of you.

Given the strategic environment surrounding the Pacific island countries and diversification of the issues, I stated, at the PALM8 that Japan will commit more deeply to the peace and prosperity of the region based on the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy", and will pursue closer coordination with sub-regional efforts.

Japan pledged its intention to implement human resource development and people-to-people exchanges of more than 5,000 people in the next three years mainly in the areas of (1) free, open and sustainable ocean (2) resilient and sustainable development and (3) connecting Pacific citizens, based on the recognition that the investment to human capital is the most effective and enduring way to address various challenges facing the region.

The future of Japan and the Polynesian countries and regions are closely bound by the Pacific Ocean. I hope to further cooperate closely with you to realize a free, open and sustainable region, in areas such as climate change, oceans, tourism and strengthening connectivity by utilizing Japan's strength, and attentively listening to the voices of people of the Polynesian countries and regions.

Shinzo Abe  
Prime Minister of Japan