



## Message from Mr. MOTEGI Toshimitsu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan

I am pleased to visit Papua New Guinea, one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse nations in the world and a country with deep historical ties with Japan.

First of all, heartfelt congratulations on PNG's 45th anniversary of independence next month. This year also marks the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and PNG. Our two countries have long worked together and shared many experiences. I feel that our bilateral relations have developed greatly in recent years, including through Prime Minister Abe's visit to PNG for APEC in 2018 and Governor-General H.E. Grand Chief Sir. Bob Dadae's attendance at the Ceremony of the Enthronement of His Majesty the Emperor last October in Japan.

With a population of approximately 9 million and rich resources such as oil and gas, minerals and seafood, PNG is a key player in the Pacific island region and an important partner for Japan. Since our bilateral investment agreement entered into force in 2014, exports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Japan have increased, and in 2018, PNG provided 4% of Japan's LNG imports.

For a Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision, Japan promotes efforts in the areas such as strengthened connectivity through high-quality infrastructure, maritime safety, and the rule of law. Here in Papua New Guinea, for example, to increase its domestic connectivity, Japan has commenced the Nadzab Airport Redevelopment Project, on which we broke ground on July 30th with the participation of Prime Minister James Marape, and the Ramu Transmission System Reinforcement Project being implemented under the PNG Electrification Partnership in collaboration with Australia, New Zealand and the United States. We believe these projects together will serve as an important foundation for revitalizing the economy and enriching people's lives. In addition to infrastructure, Japan has promoted capacity building in areas such as maritime security, education, and health, among others. Notably, the Japan Self-Defense Forces' support for the PNG military band, which performed wonderfully during the 2018 APEC meetings, is a symbol of the cooperation between our two countries. I am convinced that PNG's continued development in turn will strongly drive the prosperity and stability of the Pacific island region.

We are aware that PNG's economy has been negatively affected by the global spread of COVID-19. We pay tribute to the way the people of PNG, under the leadership of the government, are united in confronting COVID-19. Japan is at the forefront of the international community, supporting health and medical care systems of various countries. In March of this year, Japan provided PNG \$1.1 million worth of technical assistance to prevent the spread of infection, educational activities about infectious risk, and health and medical equipment through UNICEF. In June, Japan and PNG signed an Exchange of Notes for Japan's grant aid of \$8 million for health and medical equipment. In addition, in order to prevent the spread of infection in the region, Japan provided \$5.3 million in assistance to Pacific island countries, including PNG, through international organizations.

Our people-to-people exchanges are remarkable as well. So far, more than 4,300 Papua New Guineans have visited Japan through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) training programs and 1,200 Japanese experts have contributed to human and institutional development in PNG. More than 700 Japanese volunteers have lived alongside the people of Papua New Guinea, all the while working together for a better future of the country. This year marks the 40th anniversary of Japanese volunteer activities in PNG; I hope that people-to-people exchanges between our two countries will continue to progress as we pass this milestone this year.

At the 9th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting, which will be held next year, various issues, such as stronger partnership between Japan and Pacific Islands region including PNG and challenges which the region faces, will be discussed. We continue to work preparation to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 as a symbol of the world's triumph over COVID-19. With these opportunities, we expect that relationship between Japan and PNG will be further promoted.

It is a pity that on this visit I will not be able to have an opportunity to meet face-to-face or shake hands with the people of PNG due to COVID-19. Nonetheless, my sincere hope is that this visit will add a new page to the long and deep relationship between our two countries.



Prime Minister James Marape and Ambassador of Japan Kuniyuki Nakahara (middle) flanked by Civil Aviation Minister Lekwa Gure (far left) and Morobe Governor Ginson Saonu (second from far right) pictured with representatives from Dai-Nippon, JICA PNG office and the Australian High Commissioner during the groundbreaking ceremony of the redevelopment project of Nadzab Airport in Lae, Morobe, July 30, 2020.



PNG Military Band performing for goodwill port call of Japan Maritime Defense Force ship *Sazanami*, September 20, 2018



Groundbreaking ceremony for Ramu Transmission System Reinforcement Project, March 13, 2019 (from left, incumbent Finance and Rural Development Minister Renbo Paita, Hon. Koni Iguan, MP, Mr Takashi Toyama [Former JICA Chief Representative], Ambassador Satoshi Nakajima, Mr Peter Nupiri [PNG Power Ltd.], and incumbent National Planning and Monitoring Minister Sam Basil)