

パラオ国際空港完工式典 林外務大臣スピーチ

Ungil tutau. (おはようございます)

Your Excellency President Whipps,

Traditional chiefs, Senators, Delegates, Ministers, Governors, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted and proud to participate in this Grand Opening Ceremony of Palau International Airport and address to such distinguished audience.

Japan has the firm belief that Japan and the Republic of Palau are precious partners bound by historical, political and cultural ties. Our bond, in Japanese KIZUNA, dates back to more than 100 years before. Especially after the independence of the Republic of Palau, Japan has consistently contributed to the sustainable development of Palau in a wide range of areas including maritime cooperation, healthcare and climate change. Taking today's commemoration, I would like to highlight Japan's quality infrastructure assistance. For over 40 years, Japan has assisted Palau in developing infrastructure for Palau's economic and social resiliency. I can easily illustrate such assistance with examples of 1) the iconic Japan-Palau Friendship Bridge, which I passed through to come here from the Satellite Office of the President, 2) the national new landfill for sustainable waste management and 3) the second submarine cable by trilateral partnership among Japan, Australia and the United States. These are just a few examples showcasing Japan's contribution to improve Palau's connectivity to the Indo-Pacific.

Now "Palau International Airport Renovation, Expansion and Management

Project” is to be added to these magnificent examples. This is the first major public-private partnership infrastructure project in the whole Pacific region. I am confident that, as the gate way of Palau, the new terminal will promote economic and social prosperity and connectivity of Palau as well as the Pacific region. This project will become a symbol of our shared determination for a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific”. I am here to pay my respect to Sojitz, Japan Airport Terminal, JOIN, JICA and the Government of Palau for your strong partnership. Without such partnership, especially without cooperation and understanding of the Government of Palau led by President Whipps, this project would not have made such an outstanding achievement.

Taking this opportunity, I would also like to congratulate Palau’s leadership on the grand success of the Our Ocean Conference last month. These new Airport terminal buildings have already played a vital role for that success and will remain in a linchpin in welcoming many guests and tourists from every corner of the world.

Distinguished Guests,

The COVID-19 pandemic is a grave crisis of our time, and we are still suffering from the impacts. Pacific island economy, which heavily depends on international travel, has long been in the hardest time. However, it is always darkest before the dawn. Japan will support Palau in its efforts to establish stronger, safer and smoother border measures in the “with COVID-19 era” through provision of quarantine equipment. I am convinced that with Japan’s assistance, Palau will maximize its potential in supporting the future of the Pacific island countries and the world.

Finally, let me briefly touch on the 9<sup>th</sup> Pacific Leaders Meeting in last July. Japan announced the Pacific Bond Policy and made a commitment to promoting cooperation with the Pacific Island countries through an “All Japan” approach, mobilizing the strengths of Japanese ministries and agencies. Japan will continue to assist Palau for its sustainable and resilient development under the Pacific Bond Policy. I look forward to continuing working with all of you for further promotion of Japan-Palau relationship.

Kom kmal mesúlang. (皆様ありがとうございました)