

# Solomon Islands Pacific Family and Dear Friend of Japan

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Solomon Islands; a beautiful island nation in the Pacific Ocean. I am honored to be the first Japanese Foreign Minister to visit Solomon Islands. I decided to visit Solomon Islands and the Cook Islands in order to demonstrate Japan's strong commitment to Pacific Island countries.

I am greatly impressed by the spectacular nature of Solomon Islands with its beautiful coral reefs and pristine landscape. Looking back to the unfortunate history Solomon Islands experienced as a site of fierce fighting during World War II, many thoughts come to mind. Last year marked the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Guadalcanal, and I am very proud that Japan and Solomon Islands have consistently maintained friendly relations since the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Casting our gaze at events abroad, one year has passed since Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which has shaken the very foundation of the international order. Any unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force is absolutely unacceptable. As a responsible member of the international community, Japan will continue to cooperate closely with Solomon Islands to uphold a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

I believe that maintaining the unity of the Pacific Island region is very important, and Japan sincerely welcomes Kiribati's return to the PIF. Japan supports "the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent" which the PIF announced last year, and I hope that the PIF will make steady progress towards achieving its objectives.

Over the past 20 years, Japan has been holding the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM) every three years with Pacific Island countries to discuss various issues surrounding the region. At the 9th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM9) in 2021, which was attended by Prime Minister Sogavare, Japan announced five priority areas of support for Pacific Island countries under the "Pacific Bond (KIZUNA) Policy", those being; (1) COVID-19 Response and Recovery, (2) Sustainable Oceans based on the Rule of Law, (3) Climate Change and Disaster Resilience, (4) Strengthening Foundation for Sustainable and Resilient Economic Development, and (5) People-to-People Exchanges and Human Resource Development.

In a concrete contribution to ensuring safe living conditions, Japan has provided Solomon Islands with vehicles for transporting unexploded ordnance. In addition, Japan is going to provide health and medical equipment and simple sawmill equipment, with a view to promoting recovery from COVID-19 and economic development in Solomon Islands. We promise to maintain the momentum through the Ministerial Interim Meeting of PALM to be held this year and PALM10 next year, and to continue supporting Solomon Islands. In addition, Japan will strive to achieve its own emission reduction targets and strengthen its support for Pacific Island countries on the issue of climate change, which is the greatest threat to Pacific Island countries. For example, Japan has decided to take the position that it is permissible to preserve the existing baselines established in accordance with the United



Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), notwithstanding the regression of coastlines caused by climate change.

The discharge of ALPS treated water following the Fukushima nuclear accident in 2011 will be conducted after ensuring that there is no harm to the environment and human health, as committed at PALM 9. The reconstruction of Fukushima and securing the safety of people are the responsibility of the Japanese government to future generations. Japan shares with Pacific Island countries the belief that the Pacific Ocean is the common home of Japan and Pacific Island countries. Protecting the marine environment of the Pacific Ocean is also a responsibility that Japan owes to international society. Japan will never carry out anything that would cause harm to Pacific Island countries. Japan has been intensifying dialogue to gain the understanding of Pacific Island countries including Solomon Islands, and we will continue to make every effort to provide you with reassurance.

Last but not least, Japan and Solomon Islands are Pacific family and dear friends. As Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, I could not be happier to contributing to deepening Japan - Solomon Islands relations through this visit.