

(Provisional Translation)

March 19, 2024  
Japan Ministry of Defense

### Opening Remarks by Parliamentary Vice-Minister Miyake at the 2<sup>nd</sup> JPIDD

Welcome to Tokyo. I am Shingo MIYAKE, Japan's Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Defense. I extend a heartfelt welcome to Your Royal Highness Crown Prince of Tonga Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala, Your Excellency Tikoduadua, Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration of Fiji, Your Excellency Dr. Billy Joseph, Minister of Defence of Papua New Guinea, as well as to all the distinguished guests and friends from the Pacific Island Countries and partner countries who gathered here today.

The Blue Pacific Continent, with its dazzlingly bright sea and lush green islands. Today, we have come together to discuss what we can do and what we should do in this Blue Pacific Continent, to hand over a world that is more prosperous and safer to live in to our children and grandchildren's generation.

Japan has hosted "Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting," or PALM since 1997. "The Pacific Bond (KIZUNA) Policy" was announced at the last PALM 9 in 2021. Based on this policy, Japan has been steadily developing cooperative relationships with the Pacific Island Countries through an "All Japan" effort. Japan will host PALM 10 in July this year, marking the 10th anniversary of the event.

Japan's defense and security cooperation with the Pacific Island Countries has also been steadily developing. Let me touch upon two kinds of contribution the Ministry of Defense is currently making:

Firstly, Japan has been contributing to regional peace and stability with the Pacific Island Countries and other partner countries.

The vessels and aircraft of Self-Defense Forces have conducted port call and stopovers in the Pacific Island Countries, and SDF have conducted goodwill training and delivered capacity building, to contribute to enhancing the security capabilities of the Pacific Island Countries.

Last year in August, Japan for the first time held the "Japan-Pacific Island Countries and Timor-Leste Ship Rider Cooperation Program" with naval officers and maritime police members from the Pacific Island Countries on board our JS *Izumo*, nearby Australian coastal water. As evident from the exuberant smiles of the participating officers which can be seen in some photos, it truly nurtured our bond or KIZUNA.

Japan is also actively participating in initiatives led by partner countries in the Pacific Islands Region. For instance, since 2007, Japan has been participating in the “Pacific Partnership.” Most recently, we conducted medical activities in Palau and Solomon Islands. Japan would like to further promote cooperation in the region in collaboration with partner countries.

I would like to highlight another story of our efforts in Solomon Islands. Although more than 80 years have passed since the Battle of Guadalcanal in the World War II, a number of unexploded ordnances still remain in Solomon Islands. In order to decrease accidents involving the local residents, the Ministry of Defense provided its first-ever cooperation project for the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force on unexploded ordnance disposal. We are going to continue promoting such efforts step by step together with all of you, as a nation that desires peace and is committed to realizing peace.

Secondly, Japan has also contributed to the resilient and sustainable development of the Pacific Island Countries. As natural disasters become increasingly severe due to climate change, Japan is delivering capacity building to Papua New Guinea in the area of maintenance of heavy engineering equipment, which plays an important role in disaster relief operations.

We have also conducted international disaster relief activities when natural disasters occur. For example, in 2022, following the volcanic eruption in Tonga, Japan immediately dispatched the Self-Defense Forces and delivered equipment for removing volcanic ash and drinking water, for those affected by the eruption, while closely coordinating with related countries such as Australia and New Zealand.

I am delighted to see the bonds with the Pacific Island Countries in the security field steadily evolving to a stage where we are holding JPIDD. The first JPIDD was held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, making the second JPIDD first face-to-face gathering and a significant milestone.

We are facing a security environment that is increasingly severe and complex, where the lines between peacetime and contingencies, military and non-military, are blurred. The examples are new challenges in space and cyber domains as well as influence operations such as through the dissemination of disinformation, maritime issues including IUU fishing, and the common challenge of humanity, climate change. It is essential to consolidate our efforts to deal with these challenges.

Furthermore, Japan is reinforcing its efforts on Women, Peace and Security or WPS, which is a cross-cutting issue. It is essential to recognize that, during conflicts and disasters, women and girls are placed in more vulnerable situations and it is necessary to take measures in order to protect and assist them. We believe more sustainable peace can

be achieved when women participate in active and leadership roles in such areas as peacekeeping and disaster relief operations. Japan is committed to further promoting international cooperation incorporating WPS perspectives.

To discuss such broad security issues, we are honored to have participants not only from the Pacific Island Countries and partner countries but also from our partner agencies in Japan, including the Japan Coast Guard and the National Police Agency. I also appreciate the participation of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation at the special session, which has contributed significantly over the years to the stability and prosperity of the Pacific Islands Region.

Your Royal Highness, Your Excellencies, and distinguished guests, we have been blessed with this extraordinary opportunity. Over the next two days, let us engage in candid and constructive discussions, so that we can hand over peace, stability, and prosperity to the next generation. Let us try to understand each other's difficulties and work together to find solutions.

Thank you for your kind attention.