

PRESS RELEASE

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Official Opening of Japan's Grant Aid Project for Upgrading of Wharf for Domestic Transport

On June 1, His Majesty King Tupou VI officially opened the Project for Upgrading of Wharf for Domestic Transport for the Kingdom of Tonga, funded by the Government of Japan. Her Majesty, Queen Nanasipau'u also graced the ceremony with her presence along with HRH Princess Salote Mafile'o Pilolevu Tuita and Lord Tuita.

His Excellency Mr. Tetsuya Ishii, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the Kingdom of Tonga attended the ceremony as well as Honourable Samuela 'Akilisi Pohiva, Prime Minister of the Kingdom. Also present were HE Mr. Andrew Ford, Australian High Commissioner, HE Mr. Wang Baodong, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, HE Ms. Tiffany Babington, New Zealand High Commissioner, Lord Fakafanua, Speaker of Tonga's Legislative Assembly, Cabinet Ministers, Nobles of the Realm, Ms. Yukari Ono, Chief Representative of JICA in Fiji, and over 100 notable invited guests.

In addressing the occasion, H.E Mr. Tetsuya Ishii congratulated the persevering efforts and cooperation by Japanese and Tongan engineers and workers into the successful completion of the Project, which significantly contributes to improving maritime transportation for the people of Tonga. "We understand the importance of development of maritime transportation for economic prosperity, and I am sure that this project will significantly contribute to Tonga's aims of improving your capacities to secure passengers and cargo flows, and to ensure their safety, comfort and speediness." He again expressed his gratitude that the New Wharf is named by His Majesty after His Late Majesty, *King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV*.

The Project is the biggest Japanese Grant Aid in the Kingdom of Tonga, at a cost of \$3,320,000,000 Japanese Yen, which is equivalent to over \$66 million Tongan pa'anga. The Ambassador in his address highlighted that the landscaping includes a Japanese Garden describing the islands of the Kingdom of Tonga, and memorable pictures of collaboration between the local and Japanese workers were displayed at the entrance of the terminal.

"Recognizing the importance of the Wharf, and recalling the hard work of both Japanese and Tongan engineers and workers, it is my sincere hope that the Wharf will be well maintained and appropriately managed by the Government and the Ports Authority of Tonga for the benefits of not just today's generations but tomorrow's," stated His Excellency.

Hon. Samuela 'Akilisi Pohiva, Prime Minister of Tonga, expressing Japan as a true ally, extended highest gratitude on behalf of His Majesty's Government and the People of Tonga for the continuous assistance from the people and Government of Japan. He stated that "Today we marvel at God's handiwork made possible through our friendship." He added that "the Project was formulated in line with Tonga's National Infrastructure Investment Plan to strengthen domestic

transport by expanding the domestic wharf, and with growing demand and tide of development, Tonga needed this upgrade.”

“The wharf not only boast of comfortable services with breathtaking views but it is testament to our need to adapt to our current situation.” He applauded the ingenious design and commitments and the collaboration work of stakeholders in completing the Project.

Their Majesties were escorted to inspect the terminal and also viewed the Japanese Garden followed by the “*Kagamiwari Ceremony*” with which His Majesty, King Tupou V honored the ceremony by cracking the cask open.

H.E Mr. Tetsuya Ishii surprised the many audience by performing as the “*vahenga*” in the ma’ulu’ulu sitting down dance with many officials of Minister of Infrastructure as one of the entertainment for the ceremony.

END.

Attached: photos

Photos:



His Majesty King Tupou VI with H.E Mr. Tetsuya Ishii after the unveiling of the plaque for the New Wharf for Domestic Transport for the Kingdom of Tonga, funded by the Government of Japan on Friday, 1 June 2018.



The New Domestic Terminal inside the Upgraded Wharf for Domestic Transport Project.



The Plaque of the Project.



H.E Mr Tetsuya Ishii with Mrs. Ishii along with Prime Minister Akilisi Pohiva and Deputy Prime Minister Semisi Sika at the official opening of the new domestic wharf for Tonga.



The joy of appreciation expressed by Government Primary Student of Tonga at the event.

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The food tent which included Japanese sushi.



The “Kagamiwari Ceremony” honored by His Majesty King Tupou VI.



The “Ma’ulu’ulu” dance with H.E Mr. Tetsuya Ishii performed at the vahenga.