

PRESS RELEASE

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Japan's Liberal Democratic Party Parliamentarians visited the Kingdom of Tonga

Mr. Toshihiro Nikai, Secretary-General of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan led a 24 member delegation to the Kingdom of Tonga on a two day visit early this week. The Members of Delegation mostly were their first time to visit the Kingdom including five LDP Parliamentarians, the Governor of Kochi Prefecture, and the Mayors of Hirogawa Town in Wakayama Prefecture, and Kuroshio Town in Kochi Prefecture.

A bilateral meeting with Hon. Samuela 'Akilisi Pohiva, Prime Minister of Tonga was held on Tuesday, 2nd May 2017 at the Fa'onelua Convention Centre. The Hon. Prime Minister of Tonga in welcoming the Delegation extended the Government of Tonga's gratitude in their respective capacities in strengthening the bilateral relations of the two countries, most significantly with the development of Tonga.

A highlight of their visit was witnessing the signing ceremony of the Exchange of Notes and Grant Agreement for Japan's 2.1 billion Japanese Yen (Equivalent to approx. 40million pa'anga) Grant Aid for "The Project for Installation of Wind Power Generation System." The Exchange of Notes were signed by His Excellency Mr. Yukio Numata, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the Kingdom of Tonga and Hon. 'Akilisi Pohiva, Prime Minister of Tonga, while the Grant Agreement was signed by Mr. Hiroyuki Sawada, JICA's Representative from Fiji and the Hon. Prime Minister. The Delegation also met Tongan Cabinet Ministers, including Hon. Siaosi Sovaleni, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for MEIDECC, Hon. Poasi Tei, Minister for Public Enterprises and Hon. Penisimani Fifita, Minister for Education and Training.

His Excellency Mr. Yukio Numata, in his remarks at the signing ceremony confirmed that the project will install 5 windmills with more than 1.3MW in total. "This Wind Power Project is not just to help accelerate Tonga's implementation processes to achieve the goal of increasing the proportion of renewable energy to 50%, rather it is very much unique for being formulated based on understanding of Tonga's vulnerability to natural hazards, including earthquakes, tsunamis and cyclones," he stated. The project proposal was formally submitted by the Government of Tonga last year and the preparatory survey started early this year with the construction phase to start later this year, to be completed in May 2019.

Hon. 'Akilisi Pohiva on behalf of His Majesty and the Government of Tonga acknowledged the generous grant from the people and the Government of Japan. "Energy is a vital element in Tonga's social and economic development and it enhances the wellbeing and livelihood of the Tonga people," emphasized Hon. Prime Minister Pohiva. "His Majesty's Government have taken extensive measures to ensure that clean and renewable energy is accessible and well maintained and that it assists in transforming the economic landscape, our physical environment and ecosystem" he said.

Mr. Motoo Hayashi, Acting Secretary-General of LDP in his short remarks at the signing ceremony said, "It is very important to share know-how amongst the region in order to strengthen our capacity of disaster preparedness, as Japan's role in the international community". Mr. Hayashi also highlighted that Japan will host the 8th PALM (the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting) in Iwaki City, Fukushima Prefecture in May 2018,

which will be a great opportunity to discuss common agendas including Disaster Prevention and Climate Change.

Japan and Tonga's relation will further strengthen with the Delegation's audience with His Majesty King Tupou VI, at the Royal Palace on the same day.

Other official engagement of the Delegation during their short visit included, the Mayor of Kuroshio Town, Mr. Katsuya Onishi presenting Japanese school bags the "Randoseru," to the Government Primary School of Mu'a, during a lunch reception hosted by the delegation at the Tanoa International Dateline Hotel. Mayor Onishi extended that the presentation of school bags is evident of the continuous warm relation built between his town and the Tonga High School students that attended the High School Students Summit on "the World Tsunami Awareness Day," in Kuroshio last November.

Hon. Penisimani Fifita, Tonga's Minister for Education and Training thanked Mayor Onishi for the donation of the Japanese School bags and assured that the young pupil of Mu'a GPS will cherish this gift and happily talk about Japan. The Minister also acknowledged Mayor Onishi in hosting the High School Students visit last November, which was their first exposure to a high calibre international forum.

The Governor of Kochi Prefecture, Mr. Masanao OZAKI was indeed pleased to meet Mr. Manu Mataele, Deputy Chairman of Tonga Rugby Union Board during the lunch reception. Governor Kochi and his prefecture will host pre game training camp of Tonga's National Rugby Team, 'Ikale Tahi in the Rugby World Cup in 2019. Governor Kochi said he is the first Governor of Kochi to visit the Kingdom and Kochi prefecture is honoured to host the camp of the team in 2019.

The Delegation concluded their visit with emphasizes of the importance for the people of Tonga to take precautionary measures against natural disasters, by attending the unveiling ceremony for the Maui's Stone Monument a Kala'au Village, in the Western side of Tonga. Mr. Nikai was the primary person who pushed efforts to realize the adoption "World Tsunami Awareness Day" in 2015, and he expressed his delight to come and see the rock for the first time, "to see and to touch it". The Maui's Stone appears in the Tongan Legend, recounting the story of demi-god Maui Kisikisi, and at the same time, researchers hypothesize that this large coral boulder, which is believed to be the largest tsunami rock in the world, was brought 100m inland from the surrounding reefs by a massive tsunami that hit Tonga approximately thousands of years ago.

The unveiling of the monument was performed by Mr. Nikai and the Parliamentary Delegation and Hon. Siaso Sovaleni Deputy Prime Minister of Tonga, Mrs. Fekita 'Utoikamanu, CEO of the Ministry of Tourism, Hon. 'Aisake Eke People's Representative for Tongatapu Constituency # 5 and Mr. Manu'atu the Town Office of Kala'au.

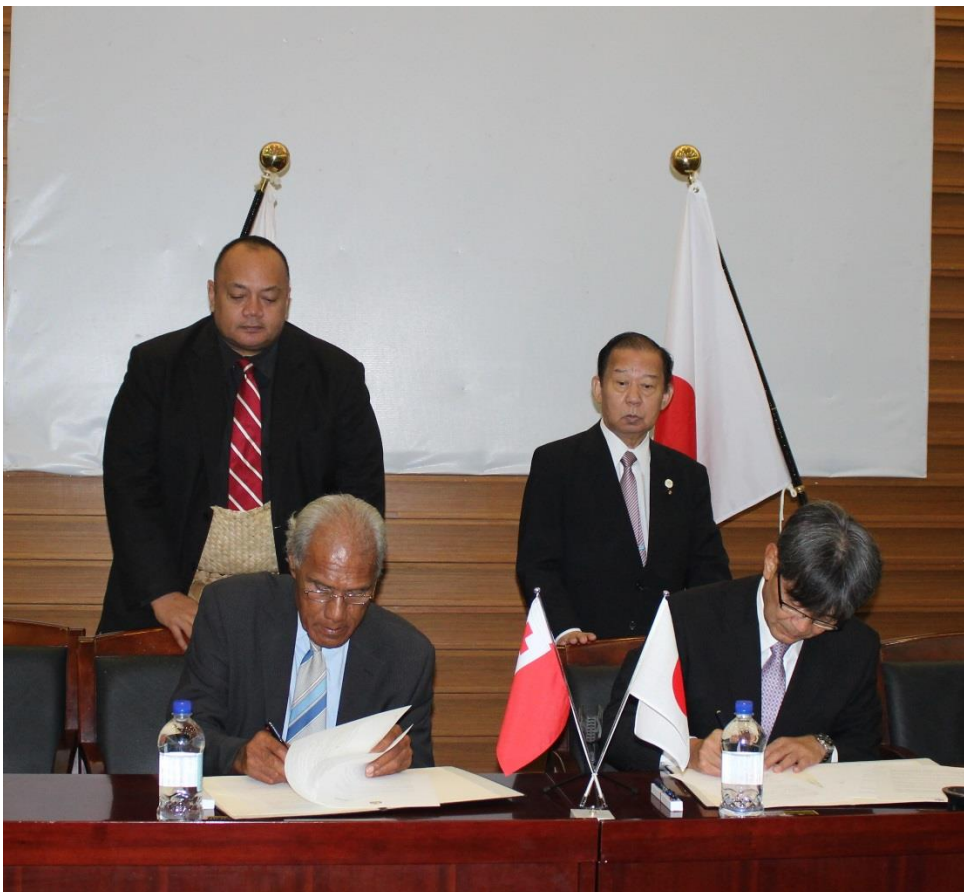
The Delegation departed Fua'amotu Airport in the evening of Tuesday, 2 May 2017.

END

Attached: Photos



Mr. Toshihiro Nika, Secretary-General of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan meeting Hon. 'Akilisi Pohiva, Prime Minister of Tonga during the Liberal Democratic Party Parliamentarian's Delegation visit to the Kingdom on Tuesday, 2 May 2017.



The Exchange of Notes signing ceremony for Japan funding the Project for Wind Power Generation in Tonga between Hon. 'Akilisi Pohiva, Prime Minister of Tonga and His Excellency Mr. Yukio Numata witnessed by Mr. Toshihiro Nikai and Hon. Siaosi Sovaleni, Deputy Prime Minister of Tonga and Minister for Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communication.



Mr. Toshihiro Nikai meeting Cabinet Ministers of Tonga during the Exchange of Note ceremony at the Fa'onelua Convention Centre in Nuku'alofa.



Mr. Toshihiro Nikai meeting Tonga High School Students who attended the "World Tsunami Awareness Day," summit last year in Kuroshio Town.



Mayor Katsuya Onishi of Kuroshio Town presenting the Japanese School Bags to pupil of Mu'a Government Primary School.



The Parliament Delegation with Hon. Penisimani Fifita, Tonga's Minister for Education and Training and the recipient of the Japanese School Bags.

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Governor Masanao Ozaki, Governor of Kochi Prefecture meeting Tonga Rugby Players at Tanoa International Dateline Hotel.



Mr. Toshihiro Nikai with Hon. Siaosi Sovaleni during the unveiling ceremony of the Maui's Stone Monument at Kala'au village on Tuesday, 2 May 2017.



Mr. Toshihiro Nikai with his delegation along with H.E Mr. Yukio Numata at the monument for Maui Stone.