

PRESS RELEASE

*EOJ/2017/01
July 7, 2017*

Japan's Pacific Environment Community Fund Solar Electrification Project for Vava'u and Ha'apai

The Government of Japan and the rural and remote communities of Vava'u and Ha'apai Islands, in the Kingdom of Tonga celebrated the Groundbreaking of solar powered water pumps and deep freezers through Japan's Pacific Environment Community (PEC) Fund Project on Monday, 3 July 2017 in Koloa, Vava'u. Hon. Samuela 'Akilisi Pohiva, Prime Minister of Tonga attended the groundbreaking ceremony along with H.E Mr. Yukio Numata, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Tonga.

Present at the ceremony were Hon. Siaosi Soveleni, Deputy Prime Minister of Tonga and Minister for MEIDECC, Hon. Semisi Fakahau, Minister for Agriculture, Hon. Dr. Saia Piukala, Minister for Health, Hon. Poasi Tei, Minister for Public Enterprise, Hon. Mateni Tapueluelu, Minister for Police, Lord Fulivai, Governor of Ha'apai, Hon. Mo'ale Finau, Governor of Vava'u, Mr. Sione Tekiteki from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Suva Fiji, and representatives of the recipient communities. Attended also the ceremony were H.E Mr. Andrew Ford, Australian High Commissioner to Tonga who was visiting Vava'u at the time, and Mr. Robert Mathews, CEO of Tonga Power Ltd.

H.E. Mr. Yukio Numata in his remarks at the ceremony congratulated the people of Vava'u and Ha'apai, he said "Japan generated the fund through the PIFS with a range of initiatives to deepen relations through our join effort to pursue developments that will lead to a resilient, sustainable and prosperous Pacific."

The Ambassador also highlighted that the project is a joint venture whereby technical experts from three Japanese companies; Shinyo Koeki Co. Ltd, Stella Environment and Mitsubishi Electric in association with the Pacific International and Kingdom Energy will enable the procurement of all the equipment. "It is my greatest pleasure to see Japan-made technologies being utilized at the grass-root level of Tongan communities to promote the exchange of knowledge and skills. Let us continue to reinforce the commitments that we have made, whereby one of the critical goals of the PALM summit is the encouragement of business development to achieve higher levels of self-sufficiency," stated the Ambassador.

Mr. Tekiteki, PIFS Director Policy expressed his gratitude to Japan and in his remarks said "now the PEC fund is within its final stages of implementation. In this respect, Pacific Leaders have recently requested Japan to replenish the Fund as well as expand its scope to cover other areas of PEC and other priorities of Pacific Island Countries, taking into account lessons learnt from the existing PEC fund arrangement."

The Deputy Prime Minister Hon. Siaisi Sovaleni also thanked the Government and People of Japan for financing the fund and other renewable energy projects in Tonga, and said that rural and remote communities were selected as the focus of PEC fund based on the fact that they are the most vulnerable communities to climate change. “Renewable energy technologies is the most viable and sustainable solution nationally, regionally and globally to address Climate Change,” stated Hon. Sovaleni.

The unveiling of the plaque and groundbreaking ceremony was performed by H.E. Mr. Numata and Hon. Pohiva, jointed by the Hon. Mo’ale Finau, Governors of Ha’apai and Lord Fulivai, Governor of Vava’u islands.

Pursuant to the outcomes of the 5th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM5) in Hokkaido in May 2009, the PEC Fund was launched and coordinated by the PIFS, under which the Government of Japan provided a 6.8 billion Japanese Yen (approximately US\$ 66 million). The solar power electrification project for Vava’u and Ha’apai receives a four (4) million US dollar grant through the fund to install 22 solar powered water pumps for 17 villages on ‘Uta Vava’u, and 36 solar powered deep freezers to be used in the remote islands of both islands.

The project is implemented by the Energy Department of MEIDECC, and is scheduled to be completed by the end of this year.

END.

Attached; photos



Prime Minister Hon. ‘Akilisi Pohiva and H.E. Mr. Numata at Koloa, Vava’u at the groundbreaking ceremony of Japan’s PEC fund project.



Unveiling of the plaque by Prime Minister Hon. Pohiva and H.E. Mr. Numata, Ambassador of Japan to Tonga.



Hon. Saia Piukala, Minister for Health joined the entertainment by the people of Koloa Village, Vava'u.



Groundbreaking of Japans PEC fund project at Koloa Village, Vava'u island, 3 July 2017.