

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Ground breaking of Japan's Grant Aid for the "Nationwide Early Warning System (NEWS) Project" value at 56 million pa'anga**

On March 29, the Government of Japan and the Government of Tonga marked the commencement of the Project for "Nationwide Early Warning System and Strengthening Disaster Communications (NEWS)," with the ground breaking ceremony of the new headquarter broadcasting building for Tonga Broadcasting Commission (TBC), at Fasi moe Afi, Nuku'alofa. Hon. Semisi Sika, Deputy Prime Minister of Tonga was the guest of honour at the ceremony, attended by His Excellency Mr. Tetsuya Ishii, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Tonga.

Present also at the event were Hon. Poasi Tei, Minister for MEIDECC and other Ministers of the Cabinet, Representative to the Legislative Assembly, Head of Diplomatic Missions, Representatives from NEMO and National Disaster Management Agencies, Government and Business Representative, Board Members of the Tonga Broadcasting Commission, JICA-Tonga Officials together with Japanese Representatives from the Projects stakeholders.

H.E Mr. Tetsuya Ishii in his remarks emphasized that the "fundamental goal of this project is to alleviate damages caused by natural disasters through the improvement of facilities and equipment for disaster early warning information system, which will operate at the all-embracing national level."

This Project is a Grant Aid Assistance from the people and the Government of Japan with an approximate worth of 2.8 billion Japanese Yen, equivalent to over 56 million Tongan Pa'anga. It is formulated based on the Japan's Country Assistance Policy to the Kingdom of Tonga, other important development frameworks such as the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), and SDGs "no one left behind."

"The NEWS project will deliver disaster warnings to everyone in Tonga in a prompt, interactive and stable manner," Ambassador said. Its three main components are the Early Warning Sound Alert System with 75 outdoor sirens and 514 indoor Remote Activated Receivers (RARs); Emergency Radio Communication System strengthening network to distribute messages interactively; and upgrading TBC headquarter broadcasting building and the Public Radio Broadcasting Network to expand coverage of the AM radio throughout the country including remote islands of Niuafo'ou and Niuatoputapu.

Ambassador Ishii also emphasized three points for the effective use; facilitating regular trainings and capacity building for relevant officials, consideration for improving rules to facilitate the system more promptly, and awareness for the people through evacuation drills at schools and communities from ordinary days. "I he paloveape faka-Tonga 'oku tau pehee, "Pelu lā kei mama'o (Sailors fold your masts from faraway in case of squall)," he said.

He concluded his remarks by highlighting the upcoming Enthronement Ceremony of the Emperor of Japan, the 2019 Rugby World Cup, Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics and 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between Japan and Tonga, and said “I am very glad that we will have another precious ‘symbol’ of our cordial relations in the future.”

Japan’s assistance is regarded historical by Hon. Semisi Sika where he stated in his keynote address that the new studio building will replace the first ever Broadcasting Studio Building for Tonga that was commissioned by Her Late Majesty, Queen Salote on the 4 July, 1961. “This is a high priority where early action is essential to save lives and to protect livelihood and property during the most challenging and difficult times of disaster and emergencies,” he said.

“The importance of this project is achieving the goals of the UN Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030,” stated Hon. Semisi Sika. He thanked the people and Government of Japan for the worthy and timely project and acknowledged the partnership saying “together we can save lives and properties of our people.”

Hon. Poasi Tei, Minister for MEIDECC also stated that Tonga is exposed to a range of natural hazards and the Government of Tonga in facing those challenges is determined to establish a more effective early warning and response system. Deputy Prime Minister signed the exchange of notes for the NEWS Project on 16 May, 2018 in Tokyo at the margin of the Eighth Pacific Leaders Meeting, PALM8.

The Project is scheduled to be completed in the latter half of 2020.

END.

Attached: photos

Photos:



The Groundbreaking ceremony for the commencement of the Project for National Early Warning System and Strengthening Disaster Communication, NEWS by Hon. Semisi Sika, Deputy Prime Minister of Tonga the guest of honour at the event held on Friday, 29 March 2019 in Nuku'alofa.





H.E Tetsuya Ishii also join in officiating the groundbreaking ceremony for the NEWS Project on Friday, 29 March.



The Address by H.E Tetsuya Ishii at the ground breaking ceremony.





The Address by Hon. Semisi Sika, Deputy Prime Minister of Tonga at the ground breaking ceremony.



Performance by the Tupou Tertiary Institute Choir at the ground breaking ceremony.



H.E Tetsuya Ishii, Mrs Ishii with Hon. Semisi Sika, Deputy Prime Minister of Tonga and Hon. Poasi Tei, Minister for MEIDECC after the ground breaking ceremony on Friday, 29 March 2019.