

Embassy of Japan

Tonga

PRESS RELEASE

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November 8, 2023

Farwell Reception for H.E. Mr. MUNENAGA

On Friday November 3, 2023 a reception was hosted to farewell His Excellency Mr. MUNENAGA Kensaku, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Tonga, and his wife Mrs. MUNENAGA Yoshiko who will be completing their term as the fifth resident Ambassador of Japan to Tonga, later the month.

The reception was held at the residence of the Japanese Ambassador in 'Anana, and was attended by Hon. Samiu Vaipulu, Acting Prime Minister (Deputy Prime Minister) of Tonga, Hon. Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Lord Vaea, Minister for Internal Affairs, Hon. Dr. Saia Piukala, Minister for Health, Hon. Sevenitini Toumo'ua, Minister for Infrastructure, Lord Fohe, Minister for Agriculture, Food and Forests, Lord Tangi 'o Vaonukonuka, Lord Tu'ivakano, Members of Parliament, Government Officials, Heads of Diplomatic Missions in Tonga along with many friends of the Ambassador in the Business and Private sectors.

His Excellency MUNENAGA in his acknowledgement remarks, expressed his gratitude for the support and cooperation received during his term, amidst the challenges of the double disaster of Hunga-Tonga Hunga-Ha'apai volcanic eruption and tsunami then the COVID-19. "Together we have witnessed historic moments," he said, in reflecting on his term. "It has been a great pleasure for me and my wife, to have lived and worked here in the Kingdom of Tonga which has been our home away from home for almost 3 years. They are not only filled with experiences from my work but also with ones from my personal life, such as swimming with the whales and trying my first bowl of kava-Tonga."

In the unprecedented crisis of HTHH and COVID-19, H.E. Ambassador MUNENAGA paved the way to the first landing of the Japanese Air Self-Defence Force in Tonga for the delivery of much needed food and water. "It was the time for Japan to repay the kindness and donation from Tonga in 2011, at the time of Great East Japan earthquake. These are the first visit by Japan's Self-Defence force to Tonga in our more than 50 years' diplomatic history." Amongst highlights while serving Tonga were the delivery of Japan's donated vaccines for COVID-19 which enabled him to visit the most northern island of Niuatoputapu and met with the people living there, and his voluntary support in teaching of Japanese language at some schools to motivate learning of Japanese, after JICA volunteers returned home in 2020 due to the pandemic.

H.E. Ambassador MUNENAGA extended his appreciation to all cooperation, friendship and kindness that have strengthen the friendship between the people and Government of Japan and the people and Government of Tonga.

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Hon. Samiu Kuita Vaipulu on behalf of His Majesty, the Government and the people of Tonga conveyed their heartfelt gratitude for H.E. Ambassador MUNENAGA, “whose leadership and mastery of diplomacy has played a pivotal role in the consolidation of mutual close, cordial and cooperation relations between Japan and Tonga over the past three years.”

“The distinctive difference, made by His Excellency, Ambassador MUNENAGA Kensaku certainly went a long way toward the Kingdom’s recovery from and resilience to the dual catastrophe of the volcanic eruption and tsunami, and COVID-19,” stated Hon. Vaipulu.

A farewell remark was also delivered by H.E. Mr. CAO Xiaolin, Ambassador of China to Tonga, and the current Dean of the Resident Missions, and before the evening concluded the closing speech was delivered by Mr. TAKASHIMA Hiroaki, Resident Representative of JICA in Tonga.

The invited guests of the farewell reception enjoyed the evening over Sushi and a variety of Japanese cuisines and sake.

END

Attached: Photos

Photos:



H.E. Mr. MUNENAGA Kensaku, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Tonga with Mrs. MUNENAGA on November 3, 2023 concluding their three year term in Tonga.

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H.E. Mr. MUNENAGA Kensaku, with Hon. Samiu Vaipulu, Tonga's Deputy Prime Minister along with Mrs. MUNENAGA and Mrs. Vaipulu.



H.E. Mr. MUNENAGA with Mrs. MUNENAGA welcoming good friends, Lord Tangi 'o Vaonukonuka and Lady Tangi in Friday evening, November 3.

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Mr. 'Etimoni Palu and Mrs. Rosemary Palu at the farewell reception for Ambassador MUNENAGA and Mrs. MUNENAGA.



Guests invited included Dr. Sione Ngongo Kioa and Lord Fohe, Minister for Agriculture, Food and Forestry.

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Hon. Fekitamoelea 'Utoikamanu, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism with Dr. 'Ana 'Akauola, Dr. Fusi Fifita, Dr. Susitina 'Akauola, Dr. Vika Lemoto and Mrs. Victorina Kioa enjoyed the Japanese dishes served.



Lord Vaea, Minister for Internal Affairs with Capt Sione Ulakai, Mr. Mafua Maka, Mr. George Lavaka and Malielau Manu at the farewell reception.

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Mr. Sam Vea and wife, Silei with Ambassador MUNENAGA and Mrs. MUNENAGA.



Police Commissioner Shane McLennan and Deputy Police Commissioner Tevita Vailea joined the farewell reception on November 3rd.

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Japanese Sake and Japanese liquors served at the reception



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