



21 May 2015 It is my great pleasure to welcome leaders from the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) and holding the seventh Pacific Island Leaders Meeting (PALM7) on the 22nd and 23rd of May.

Launched in 1997, this triennial summit held by Japan and the PICs has always acted as a compass of cooperation and a powerful engine of partnership. The coming summit should be a golden opportunity for us to look back on our history of cooperation and to take a joint commitment towards its further development in the future.

Welcoming Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tonga, Hon. Samuela 'Akilisi Pohiva and the other leaders of the PICs, this historic event will take place in Iwaki City, Fukushima Prefecture. Iwaki was struck by the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011. Four years after the earthquake, however, we are proud to show you Iwaki being energetically restored to its former state. This reconstruction was made possible thanks to the compassionate encouragement and assistance offered by the people around the world, including the Kingdom of Tonga and the other PICs. It is a great pleasure for all of us to show you the revived Iwaki at PALM7. I am convinced that discussing the way forward to strengthen our partnership between Japan and the PICs in Iwaki is the best way to express our deepest gratitude to you.

Japan is not the only country which is devoting all its energy to reconstruction. Cyclone Pam, which struck the Republic of Vanuatu and its neighbours and Typhoon Maysak, which struck the Federated States of Micronesia only two weeks later, have demonstrated that disaster risk reduction remains one of our common and most important challenges. I hereby extend my sincere condolences to the affected people and their families, and reiterate our determination to contribute to reconstruction and

rehabilitation.

Naturally, disaster risk reduction will be one of the main themes of the coming summit, together with other important issues such as the environment, climate change, sustainable development, people-to-people exchanges and maritime issues. I sincerely wish to have substantial and constructive discussion on further advancing our cooperation with Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tonga, Hon. Samuela 'Akilisi Pohiva and the other leaders of the PICs, based on our experiences and lessons learned.

Preparing for PALM7, I contemplate the course we have taken together and realize again the warm friendship and solid mutual trust that lie between us.

Sharing the common spirits of islanders nurtured by this great ocean, the Pacific Ocean, we have always cooperated towards peace and prosperity.

Based on this track record, I believe that Japan and the PICs can, and should play an even more active role in the pursuit of the peace and prosperity of the international community in the coming years and decades. To this end, we must make the coming PALM7 a cornerstone of our strengthened partnership.

It is my sincere hope that Japan and the PICs, based upon our long-lasting friendship, mutual trust and cooperation, will continue to contribute hand in hand to the peace and prosperity in the Pacific and the international community. I look forward to welcoming Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tonga, Hon. Samuela 'Akilisi Pohiva and the other leaders of the PICs in Iwaki.

Shinzo Abe
Prime Minister of Japan