

## Opinion Editorial

# Sharing the Blue Pacific Continent: JICA's enduring commitment from the past to the future

Japan has strong ties with the people of the Pacific Island Countries (PICs), through our shared history and cultural commonalities. We are all island nations and our livelihoods are closely interlinked with the Pacific Ocean.

### *Respecting the Pacific Way*

We at JICA have deep admiration for the 'Pacific Way' mentioned by Prime Minister Mara at the UN General Assembly in 1970: respecting the region's rich and traditional cultures; its value on the cohesion and solidarity of communities; and creating unity based on cooperation among island nations. We also appreciate the PICs' shared aspiration to decide regional matters peacefully through respectful, consultative, and inclusive discussions. That has contributed to building resilience in the region. These locally imbedded practices are well regarded as the original development model in the Pacific Way.

### *The 2050 Strategy and the Kuranari Doctrine*

Japan has been closely working with PICs for their nation building since the 1970s. In 1987, then-Japanese Foreign Minister Tadashi Kuranari declared five principles of Japan's cooperation with the Pacific that would later be recognized as the Kuranari Doctrine: (i) respect for independence and autonomy; (ii) support for existing arrangements for regional cooperation; (iii) assistance in preserving political stability; (iv) the provision of assistance to make the region more prosperous; and (v) the promotion of people-to-people exchanges.

The "2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent", the PICs' first long-term development strategy issued in 2022, sets the principles that all partners must adhere to.

Yet, the principles outlined in this

strategy are not new to Japan, as they share common values with the Kuranari doctrine. Thus, our respect and engagement with PICs will remain steadfast and unwavering.

Kizuna – nurturing mutual trust  
Based on these principles, JICA has supported various development initiatives and projects in the region for the improvement of health and education, and, more recently, for environmental protection and climate change adaptation. Our long history of people-to-people cooperation in the region has generated solid results in its development, alongside forging mutual understanding and 'Kizuna' (bonds) between people in the Pacific Islands and Japan.

### *People-to-people connection*

Our cooperation in the Pacific region started with the initial dispatch of volunteers to Samoa in 1972. Since then, early 5,000 Japanese volunteers have lived and worked in the region. They have shared their knowledge and expertise with people in various fields and workplaces; in turn, they have learned the deep-seated values of the region. These volunteers have strong and enduring attachments to their respective Pacific communities and countries.

Furthermore, many officials from government and public organizations of the PICs have come to Japan for JICA's knowledge-sharing and training courses, including scholarship programs. We are delighted that graduates of these programs are now playing key roles in their respective governments and are actively contributing to their



national development.

JICA has a long history of contributing to the development of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) through various projects such as harbor extensions in Yap and Chuuk, Pohnpei International Airport, road improvements in Yap and Pohnpei, and the power station in Kosrae. JICA also works in sectors including fisheries, health, education, tourism, and waste management in the four states. This work is conducted through technical experts, 451 volunteers dispatched since 1989, and more than 750 participants of the training scheme since 1979.

### *Beyond traditional security: commitment to human security*

Recently, in the midst of a changing geopolitical environment, much of the world's attention in the Pacific focuses on conventional security challenges. However, as stipulated in the 2050 Strategy, the definition of security must adapt to encompass a more inclusive approach to security issues including human, economic, environmental, and cyber securities as well as resilience to disasters and climate change. This concept is compatible to the Japan's ODA guiding principle and JICA's mission of human security. Human security is a state in which people,

as individuals, are free from fear and want and can live with dignity. JICA has supported our partner countries to ensure human security, which is threatened by various sources of complex global challenges. Based on such shared concepts of human security, we are committed to work with the PICs for development in the region.

Shared pride and shared voice – we, islanders

Islanders of the Pacific, including the people of Japan, have historically experienced the vulnerabilities that island life can present. However, we all have also overcome those difficulties courageously by living with the ocean. Based on the challenges we have jointly faced as island nations, JICA will fully utilize our knowledge of the Pacific context to engage in the 2050 Strategy for further development of FSM and the region. Always keeping JICA's vision of 'Leading the World with Trust' in mind, JICA will be a trusted partner of the people of FSM in working together in the Pacific way, for its betterment of people's life, human security, and sustainable nature. We look forward to projecting our voices across the world – together with empathy, resonance, and the shared pride of all Pacific islanders.

Finally, I am sincerely grateful for the warm welcome I received from the FSM government and people during my visit to FSM on June 22-25.

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