

## REMARKS

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Ambassador of the Federated States of Micronesia

On the Occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of  
The Federated States of Micronesia  
Independence

Excellencies and Friends,  
Honored Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I welcome all of you to our reception this evening and thank you for coming. We are greatly honored by your presence which will make the evening more enjoyable and special. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the presence of the Honorable Members of the Diet and officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Fisheries Agency. While we are celebrating an important event in the young life of the Federated States of Micronesia, this celebration is also our way of thanking the Government and People of Japan particularly our friends who have joined us tonight, for the friendship and generous support for my country.

Today marks an important historical milestone in the journey of our ship of state called the Federated States of Micronesia to a better tomorrow. Tonight we are commemorating its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday as a sovereign and independent country. While much has been accomplished, much remains to be done. Nation-building is a never-ending task and a most difficult undertaking for any people, and our experience has not been any different given our size, geographical remoteness and lack of resources.

The Federated States of Micronesia has had an excellent relationship with Japan even before diplomatic relations was established more than 18 years ago. The friendly relation is based on shared values, common interests as Pacific island neighbors and historical ties forged at the turn of the century when Japan assumed direct administration of the entire Micronesian region under a League of Nation's mandate in 1914. Our bilateral relation with Japan is one of the key underpinnings of our overall foreign policy.

The work of nation-building would have been much more challenging and my country would not have progressed this far without Japan's generous development assistance since 1984. Japan is one of the major donor countries for the Federated States of Micronesia. Much of our infrastructure including airports, seaports, roads, shore-side fishing facilities, etc. was built with ODA support from Japan. Its technical assistance program, including the dispatch of experts and Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV), has assisted greatly in my country's economic and social development efforts.

But to achieve its goal of more self-reliance, the Federated States of Micronesia needs the continued support of its donor friends for many years to come.

For any relationship to be dynamic and lasting, it must be mutually beneficial. The Federated States of Micronesia will continue to be a good friend for Japan. It was one of the first Pacific Island Forum countries to declare support for Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations' Security Council. Since then, our leaders have reaffirmed our commitment at various forums. The FSM has also consistently supported Japan's candidatures for important posts at the United Nations and other international organizations. At the Pacific Island Forum, my country has collaborated closely with Japan as an important Post-Forum dialogue partner on important issues for the Asia-Pacific region. Finally the FSM supports Japan's innovative approach to regional assistance and cooperation under auspices of the Pacific and Japanese leaders' (PALM) summits, through which enhanced development assistance is being channeled, bilaterally and multi-laterally, to the region in support of national development plans and the recently adopted Pacific Plan.

Given Japan's recent declining budgetary outlays due to public reform initiatives, it's our hope that there will be an increase in private sector investment in the islands by Japanese firms to help us grow our economy in order to improve the lives of our people. While there seems to be increasing interest in the islands, unfortunately there is very little business activity on the part of Japanese companies at the moment. Without more active participation by the Japanese private sector in our development, our progress towards enhanced self-reliance will be less than satisfactory. Accordingly, my country encourages and welcomes additional investments in Micronesia to complement the commendable effort of the Japanese Government. An economically viable Micronesia is in the best interests of Japan.

My country also welcomes more grassroots exchanges between our peoples. The number of Japanese visitors to my country while increasing is still very small. We would like to encourage more youth exchanges particularly in sports as a way to educate young people to the important historical ties between Japan and the Federated States of Micronesia which needs nurturing if it's going to continue. We are hopeful that with the announcement of the Okinawa Partnership during the last PALM Summit in May which emphasizes people to people exchanges and communications, among others, that we will see an appreciable increase in interactions between our peoples.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to recognize some very important friends. With great honor, I begin with Mr. Yoshiro Mori, former Prime Minister of Japan and Chairman of the Japan-FSM Parliamentary Friendship League, who has been a good friend of the Micronesian people. His visit to the Islands in 2001 is remembered by many with fond memories and much appreciation. Our people hope he will be able to find time in the future to honor us again with another visit. Unfortunately, he is unable to be with us tonight.

We appreciate very much the recent visit by former Minister of State for Disaster Management Tetsuo Kutsukake to the Micronesian region, as a special envoy for former Prime Minister Koizumi, and his keen interest in the many problems facing small Pacific island countries which he was able to discuss with our officials during his stops in the Federated States of Micronesia. His friendship is welcome and very much appreciated.

We congratulate former Environment Minister Yuriko Koike, a valued friend and member of the Japan-FSM Parliamentarian Friendship League, on her new post as Special Adviser to the Prime Minister for Security Affairs. We recalled with appreciation her concern for the environmental problems impacting small Pacific island countries like Micronesian, and her willingness to assist in finding solutions to such difficult environmental challenges that are contributing to the further degradation of the environment.

We also extend sincere appreciation to members of the Japan-FSM Parliamentarian Friendship League for their continued friendship and cooperation in the advancement of the friendly relations between Japan and the Federated States of Micronesia.

I see a bright future for the friendship between Japan and the Federated States of Micronesia because it's based on a solid foundation and is in the best interests of both countries. But, even strong relationships need to be renewed and strengthened from time to time through periodic consultations and innovations. We must guard against complacency which could undermine the friendly ties that have bound our peoples and countries together over the years. Tonight I urge all of us to continue to be a positive force in deepening further our relations for our mutual benefit.

Thank you.