

Seminar address: Pacific Islands Festa, Nippon Foundation Building, Tokyo,  
Tuesday, 5 October 2010

Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Ohayo gozaimasu,  
Yoroshiku Onegaishimasu.

Welcome and thank you for accepting our invitation to attend this seminar.

Thursday, 30<sup>th</sup> of September last week marked the first anniversary of the major earthquake and resulting tsunami which caused widespread destruction in Samoa, American Samoa and Tonga last year. The earthquake which occurred near the Tonga trench which is located north of Tonga and south of Samoa measured 8.3 on the Richter Scale, (a tokai-level earthquake) while the waves generated by the tsunami reached as high as 14.5 metres or 46 feet. The earthquake itself did not cause much damage to buildings or infrastructure, but the tsunami waves caused widespread devastation resulting in the confirmed death of 143 people including 9 foreigners, with four missing presumed dead; and the destruction of villages, important tourism infrastructure, schools, roads, electricity transmission and water pipes, in many parts of Samoa.

The official report on the tsunami, its impact, and the response has now been published by the Samoa government. It provides details of important developments at different stages of the tsunami and its aftermath. It includes a list of all the people who perished in the tsunami and also a full list, up to 20 August 2010, of assistance in kind and in cash donated by both the local people and institutions, as well as assistance received from the international community. The Apia office of the Japan International Corporation Agency (JICA), organized one of the first groups of helpers coordinated by the Samoa National Disaster Council to provide assistance in the devastated areas. This was followed by the in-flow of official disaster assistance from the Japanese government, part of which will continue for some time on certain long-term projects such as the rebuilding of large school buildings and the rehabilitation of the foreshore. This official assistance has been organized according to long and well-established Japanese policies of providing humanitarian assistance to countries and people who suffer from natural disasters.

I was greatly surprised and deeply humbled however by the most generous response to the Samoa tsunami by members of Japan's public. Samoa is little known in Japan, even in some official circles, as we discovered when we first started the operations of Samoa's Embassy in Tokyo in July 2009. But after the tsunami devastated Samoa last year, representatives of cities, municipalities, schools, organizations and individuals who did not know anything about Samoa before the tsunami struck, came to Samoa's newly-established Tokyo Embassy, and donated significant amounts of money to help Samoa's tsunami relief efforts. At the same time, many Japanese companies and individuals who have

been or are involved in Samoa established a special Samoa tsunami bank account in Tokyo in which they deposited their contributions. The contributions from all these Japanese institutions and individuals amounted to some JPY7,500,000. Members of the Samoa community in Japan, about 50 altogether, including students and trainees from Samoa, put on a spectacular fund-raising concert of Samoan entertainment, and they raised over JPY2,000,000 which was remitted to the official Samoa tsunami relief fund in Apia.

I want to take this opportunity, on behalf of the government and the people of Samoa, the Samoa Embassy to Japan and its staff, and on my own behalf to thank the government and people of Japan, as well as the Japanese companies, institutions and individuals who have provided assistance in whatever way, to help Samoa to recover from the destruction wrought by the massive tsunami which struck our country at the end of September, 2009.

The government and the people of Samoa know that the best way to reward the local people as well as governments and members of the international community who have rallied so splendidly to Samoa's side in her time of need, is to ensure that the donated aid is efficiently and properly used for tsunami relief and recovery projects. The donated tsunami relief funds are being competently managed in a transparent and accountable way, open to public scrutiny. The report sets out clearly not only the donors and the amount and nature of their donation but also the purpose the donated funds have been and are being used for. Apart from the rehabilitation of the public works

infrastructure which the government is responsible for, the government also decided that instead of leaving it up to the families to build new houses to replace homes which have been destroyed in this natural disaster, as per the normal practice of families being responsible to replace their own private property, the government approved public funding for a housing scheme for an estimated 502 new homes and about 360 homes needing significant repairs, to be built using a standard design that provided a cyclone resistant structure and included sanitation facilities and a water tank. The prefabrication of the homes was made possible through the work of the NZ Habitat for Humanity. To date, building supplies for 502 new homes and 360 houses needing major repairs have been paid and provided by government. With the 181 new houses provided by the NGOs, building supplies for a total of 862 houses being built under this scheme have been provided. The families provided their own builders and the work is supervised by government inspectors. This scheme which costs ST9.34 million is a good example of the use to which the Samoa tsunami relief fund, the fund into which all contributions from the Japanese public have been deposited has been put to. I shall be happy to answer any questions relating to the Samoa tsunami later.

I now want to use the opportunity presented by this seminar to try and remedy the apparent lack of information on Samoa in Japan, by providing some basic information on Samoa (known as Western Samoa until 1997). Samoa is located in the central Pacific, within latitudes 13<sup>0</sup> and 15<sup>0</sup> south and longitudes 168<sup>0</sup> and 173<sup>0</sup> west. The ten volcanic islands which make up Samoa lie in the western part of the Samoa archipelago which stretches 360 kilometres on an east-west axis, while the islands constituting American Samoa lie on the eastern part. Samoa lies in a direct

line between Honolulu, Hawaii, 3,680km north-east and Auckland, New Zealand, 2,560km south-west. Samoa is made up of two main islands, Upolu and Savaii which contain 98% of the total land area of approximately 3000sq. km, and 99% of the total population estimated at 200,000 in 2010. The four inhabited islands are in sight of each other, the furthest apart a 90 minutes trip by boat.

The close proximity of the four inhabited islands, means that Samoa is well placed to provide quality infrastructure and social services to all her people, in contrast with the other Pacific island countries (except Nauru and Niue) whose inhabited islands are spread out over vast distances in the Pacific ocean. Accordingly, all Samoan villages on Upolu and Savaii, regardless of how isolated, are accessible by tar-sealed roads. And over the last 3-4 years, the government has started building tar-sealed roads providing easy vehicular access to plantations in a program to encourage better and increased production from the agricultural sector on the two main islands. There are no vehicles on Manono and Apolima, the two smaller inhabited islands located between Upolu and Savaii. There is 100% coverage, including Manono and Apolima, with electricity and telecommunications, and 80% water reticulation. Inter-island transportation is regular, reliable, inexpensive and provided by modern purpose-built vessels provided under Japanese overseas development aid to Samoa.

The average annual population growth over the last ten years is 2%, dropping to 1.25% when the annual migration overseas, to New Zealand mainly, is taken into account. The sizable annual migration to New Zealand, made under special arrangements between the two governments as a result of historical and close personal links, has been a unique feature of the relationship between Samoa and New Zealand since Samoa regained her full Independence in 1962. This arrangement is of crucial importance to Samoa for many reasons but in particular it provides Samoans with employment opportunities not available in Samoa. The New Zealand government has

begun introducing a similar immigration scheme, but on a much smaller scale, for other Pacific island countries, starting with Tonga, Tuvalu and Kiribati. This is a far-sighted measure taken by New Zealand, which could become a shining model for the rest of the developed countries of the world, in light of the destructive impact of climate change and sea-level rise in Pacific island countries.

The population of Samoa is made up of 93% Samoans and 7% foreigners and part-Samoans. Samoans are Polynesians, as are Tongans, New Zealand and Cook Island Maoris, Tahitians, Hawaiians, Tuvaluans and others. The other two major groups in the Pacific islands region are Melanesians, made up of Papua New Guineans, Solomon Islanders, Ni-Vanuatu, and Fijians; and Micronesians, made up of the people of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, and Nauru. Samoa is the largest Polynesian sovereign nation in the world. It is the fifth largest, in terms of population and land mass, of the twelve independent Pacific island countries.

Samoa's nearest neighbour is American Samoa. It is an unincorporated territory of the United States of America with an estimated population of 65,000 (2010), many of whom originated from Samoa. The population is made up of 90% Samoans and 10% Europeans and part-Samoans. They share the same culture and language as the people of neighbouring Samoa, and it would be unusual for a Samoan person not to have close relatives in American Samoa and vice versa. The two countries and their people have worked together closely in peace and harmony, officially and personally, since their political separation in 1900. Many American Samoans migrate to Hawaii and the United States in search of better employment opportunities, better education for their children, and easier availability of better social services. This migration creates employment opportunities at all levels of government and the private sector which people from Samoa happily take up. I

personally know of several very senior public servants, including heads of government departments, who are individuals from Samoa, and of the 3000 workers laid off by the U.S. fish canning operations in American Samoa over the last eighteen months, about 60% were people from Samoa. Most Samoans who migrate to American Samoa later qualify for entry into the United States.

Interestingly, Samoans and American Samoans who leave their island countries refer to themselves simply as Samoans when they are overseas. And they cooperate and mix together closely as Samoans when overseas. So Pastor Talo Sataraka, the only Samoan Christian pastor who works in Japan, who was born and raised in American Samoa before moving to Hawaii at the age of 16 years for his education has happily taken up the task of leading the religious services needed in certain events organised by the Embassy of the Independent State of Samoa to Japan. Similarly, Yokozuna Musashimaru, who was born and raised in American Samoa before leaving with his family to settle in Hawaii at the age of 11 years, was happy to meet the Samoa Ambassador and all the staff members of the Samoa Embassy in Tokyo, and he has indicated his strong support towards our Mission. Both these gentlemen speak splendid Samoan and both are of course very well versed in Samoan culture. We are looking forward to meeting up with Ozeki Konishiki san.

The leaders of Samoa have not tried to persuade the leaders and the people of American Samoa to join them. This attitude has been due to respect for the people of American Samoa and their freedom to choose whatever political system for themselves. It is also due to the fact that Samoa benefits significantly by the presence of the U.S. next door. The military might of the U.S. bringing security to Samoa which has no military or paramilitary force, and which sees no good reason to have such a force, is an obvious benefit. The splendid airport and harbour facilities in American Samoa which are arguably the best available such facilities in the Pacific

island countries, due to their readiness for use by the U.S. military, is another important benefit.

Samoa has no exploitable mineral resources, and its economy is based on tourism, agriculture, fisheries and manufacturing. It also receives a large amount of remittances, accounting for about 25% of her GDP, from Samoans who live and work overseas. Samoa is the recipient of significant development aid assistance from the international donor community, with Japan a leading aid donor. Samoa's GDP this year stands at US\$504million. Between 1997-2007, the economy grew at an average 4.2% annually. The global financial crisis which started in 2008, and the massive earthquake and resulting tsunami which devastated Samoa in September 2009, impacted seriously on the economy, driving it to negative growth but the recovery has started and economic growth of 1-2% is predicted for 2010. Samoa's economy is efficiently and competently managed. The overriding objective is to be self-sufficient. The fair distribution of economic benefits and wealth through the provision of quality infrastructure, and the promotion of equal opportunities through the provision of quality schools and health centres throughout the whole country are important factors in Samoa being successful in her development efforts. Another important factor has been the absence of corruption and fraud amongst Samoan politicians, the public service, the private sector and society at large.

For several years now, Samoa has been the highest ranked Pacific island country in the annual United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Social Index Survey which measures the level of the quality of life indicators for each of the UN member countries: about the same rank as Thailand with its massive manufacturing sector and highly developed tourism industry and Iran with its huge oil resources. Samoa is well placed to achieve the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 as decided by the World leaders in 2000 in an effort to improve the basic living



conditions of people in developing countries. There was concern that the combined negative impact of the global financial crisis and the tsunami devastation might result in Samoa failing to achieve the MDGs by 2015. However, the recovery in the economy and the strong positive reaction by the Samoan people has revived the forecast of Samoa achieving the MDGS well before the deadline.

Samoa's modern political system is based largely on the Westminster model, as well as Samoan cultural forms and practices. Samoa was the first Pacific island country to regain full independence in 1962. It is a parliamentary democracy with a single-house parliament of 49 elected lawmakers, a Prime Minister elected by Parliament, a Cabinet of 12 Ministers chosen by the Prime Minister, and a Head of State elected by Parliament on 5-year terms. While every Samoan citizen 21 years and older is eligible to vote in parliamentary elections, only those who hold chiefly titles (*matai* or titled heads of Samoan extended families in the villages) are eligible to be candidates for election as Members of Parliament: an example of the inclusion of traditional Samoan practices in Samoa's parliamentary system. Samoans are happy with this requirement, first because it is an important official recognition of the *fa'a Samoa* (Samoan cultural way) and also because chiefly titles do not pass from father to son, the successor to a chiefly title being chosen by the members of extended families from amongst themselves, so that every adult Samoan is eligible to hold a chiefly title, and usually each family has the right to bestow several chiefly titles. The separation of powers between Parliament, the executive, and the judiciary; the rule of law; and the solidly established modern and traditional institutions provide the cornerstones for the vibrant, confident and progressive Samoa of today.

Two systems of courts operate in Samoa. The first is the system modeled on the British courts with the District/Magistrates Court and the Supreme Court manned by

Samoan judges, fully qualified from overseas universities (N.Z + Australia) and with the necessary experience and qualities to be judges on these courts. The highest court is the Court of Appeal which is usually presided over by senior overseas judges from New Zealand and Australia. The Chief Justice, a Samoan, is the head of the judiciary. The second system refers to the Lands and Titles court which deals with matters relating to traditional lands and traditional Samoan chiefly titles. The judges on this court are Samoan men and women who are well versed in Samoan culture and who may not speak fluent English. No lawyers appear before this court. The cases are argued by the Samoans involved in the disputes. About 80% of land in Samoa is held under Samoan customary title and this land cannot be alienated. It stays with the family which owns it so that every Samoan always has access to land for his use as a member of a family. After his use, the land remains with the family and he cannot claim it as his own.

Samoa is regarded as the most stable Pacific island country politically, economically and socially. The remarkable peace which Samoa has enjoyed since it regained full independence forty-eight years ago, belies its history of wars and conflict. Before foreigners from outside the Pacific arrived in Samoa starting in the eighteenth century, Samoan clans/districts were engaged in seemingly endless wars. This state of affairs continued after the arrival of the Europeans including Christian missionaries. When the Germans colonised the western islands of Samoa (Western Samoa) in 1900, and the United States took over the eastern islands, the Western Samoans continued with their wars and conflict, but now involving the Germans. The German Governor reacted by calling in warships and soldiers who subdued the senior Samoan chiefs who led the agitation and deported them and several of their retainers, 72 altogether, to Saipan in the Northern Marianas. When New Zealand took over as the administration power at the beginning of World War I, the Samoans maintained

their insistence on ruling themselves; violent clashes occurred resulting in the death of many Samoans. The situation calmed down a little after Samoa was placed under the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations, whose specific task was to prepare the people of colonised countries for Independence. The Samoans however continued to put pressure on the Trusteeship Council and New Zealand, and this led to Western Samoa regaining its full independence in 1962, several years before the next Pacific island countries to regain full independence, Nauru (1968) and Fiji (1970), did so. Unlike Samoa, there was fortunately no violent agitation for self-government or independence in the other colonised Pacific island countries where stability and peaceful co-existence was maintained. The position unfortunately changed to one of varying degrees of conflict and upheaval after the Pacific island countries regained their full independence. Samoa has been in the forefront of reforms in the finance and the public sectors, and it has maintained a strong push to strengthen the private sector so that it becomes the engine of Samoa's economic growth. Generous tax and development incentives, equal to the best incentives offered by other regional countries, are provided to potential investors. Law changes over the last two years has meant that Samoa is now able to process business documents in a matter of days.

Yazaki Samoa, a Japanese company which makes electrical wiring for motor vehicles, has been in operation in Samoa for about twenty years and is the biggest employer in the private sector with a workforce which has at times exceeded 3,000 people. It is an experienced business operator in Samoa where it maintains excellent relations with government authorities, and it is also deeply involved in promoting and supporting highly worthwhile community projects, such as tree planting and healthy lifestyles. Japanese companies interested in investing in Samoa would be well advised to talk to senior Yazaki executives in Japan with extensive knowledge of doing business in Samoa and of course any Japanese company, institution or individual who

is interested in any aspect of Samoa, is most welcome to contact the Samoa Embassy in Tokyo.

Domo Arigatou Gozaimashita.