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Address by H.E. Mr. Rokuichiro MICHII, at the SIDS (Pacific Island Countries) Capacity-Building Workshop on the Implementation of the Jaipur Declaration on 3R and Circular Economy (2025-2035), Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> July 2025, Holiday Inn, Suva

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Dr. Sivendra Michael, Permanent Secretary for Fiji' s Ministry  
of Environment and Climate Change,

Esteemed Representatives of UNCRD and SPREP, Eminent  
Representatives of Pacific Island Country Governments, UN  
Organizations, and Academic Institutions,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bula Vinaka, Good Morning and Ohayo Gozaimau

I am greatly honoured to be invited to this event and equally  
delighted to join you all here today.

It is my immense privilege to serve as Japan' s Ambassador to  
Fiji, Nauru and Tuvalu as well as Japan' s Permanent  
Representative to the Pacific Islands Forum. So, I suppose it  
is quite obvious that I have a wide ranging regional  
responsibility. This includes prioritizing enhancement of

regional climate and environmental action as well as promoting waste management and reducing pollution, among others, which deeply harmonizes with the work of UNCRD, SPREP and Fiji's Ministry of Environment and Climate Change as well as other key stakeholders. This is why in my opening line I expressed my great honour on being invited to this event and being equally delighted to join you all here today

I applaud the Japan based UNCRD, and SPREP as well as Fiji's Ministry of Ministry of Environment and Climate Change together with all the stakeholders for planning and delivering this workshop. I also acknowledge the great timing of your workshop as today it is 'Marine Day', a National holiday in Japan, which marks and pays homage to the blessings and bounty from the ocean while heightening awareness, nurturing greater care and instilling increased concern for the oceans and the seas.

About a year and a half ago, I began my term in Fiji and since then I have come to know and better understand the many challenges that Fiji and other Pacific Island Countries collectively face such as climate change, disaster management, infrastructure needs, strengthening key primary industries including agriculture and fishery, driving SMEs for wider economic growth, health, education, fight against drugs, border security, illegal fishing, and the human resource development for all these. Through seeing it first hand, I realized the urgent need to protect environment and the need for improving waste management. Together with the people of this region, I have experienced and lived through the notion that, “the PICs and SIDS have polluted the least but they suffer the most as they are facing the brunt of climate change”. This is an everyday reality here, with some countries even facing an existential threat.

Given such high stakes with the global climate emergency upon us, your 'Workshop on 3Rs and Circular Economy' is like 'a call to arms' in the battle against global warming, climate change, waste management and pollution. I congratulate you all, the organizers, the stakeholders, the hosts and the participants for this meaningful and practical accomplishment.

Today we start Workshop on 3Rs and Circular economy, which is to build upon the Jaipur Declaration made at the 12th Forum held in Jaipur, India, from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> March 2025. By addressing circular economy models, we recognize the strong leadership UNCRD, and UN DESA played in realizing the 10 year (2025-2035) Jaipur Declaration on 3R and Circular economy in collaboration with the Indian Government, Japan's Ministry of Environment and UNESCAP.

I am pleased to say that nowadays Circular economy is not merely a theoretical concept. It is a proven and practical action

we should take. In Japan, separation of waste and recycling has been in place for many years and is deep rooted in the society. But it was not like this from the beginning. When I was a child, there was not such a thing as separation of waste or recycling. We have steadily developed this into practice just for the last 40-50 years. So, this shows it is possible to bring it into practice.

Please allow me to provide some examples of Japan. In Kamikatsu Town, in Tokushima Prefecture, they separate waste into 45 categories! As a result, their recycle ratio has reached 81% reused. If you think this is extreme, then you might marvel at my next example, which is Oosaki town in Kagoshima Prefecture, as they surpassed Kamikatsu Town, by accomplishing a recycle ratio of 83% reused!

You may think this has been made possible, because of size of the towns' population. Well, Kamikatsu 1500 people, about the size of Niue and Oosaki has around 12000 residents, equivalent to that of Tuvalu, or Nauru. And here is the knockout blow,

maybe extreme even for me, they actually are targeting Zero waste! Yes – zero waste.

But, even in a big city like Tokyo, (huge metropolitan city of 14.3million population), every one, still has to separate waste into at least 6-7 categories. Combustible waste, non-combustible, plastic, paper, milk carton packaging, plastic bottle removing cap, battery, electric light bulb, Bulky trash, and so on. And, very importantly my wife made it my job to do the separation of waste into categories and putting them on the proper collation point while I am in Tokyo. Similar waste separation system is used in Kamakura, a city nearby Tokyo, which has popular tourist site famous for big Buddhist statue, with a population of 170 thousand, and a waste recycle ratio of 50%.

We need to pay attention to all the phases of the whole waste management process – from upstream to downstream.

Not to throw away, Reduce, Collect waste, Reduce, Reuse are important. And, I think Waste treatment process is needed and important not just to landfill, because after all waste remains there indefinitely and increases over time which would cause environmental concerns. In 1938, a land fill was constructed in Tokyo bay and after WWII all the waste went in it. It was named 'Island of Dream', it soon became the source of diseases and in 1970, it was terminated as waste land fill site and Japan moved into incinerating waste. Now, the site is a park with trees and greenery. As for the incinerators, in Japan we use high quality incinerators which burn waste with extremely high temperature, so it does not emit toxic gases. It is clean and located in the middle of residential areas. Expensive and regular maintenance is required to operate such incinerators. So, for the Pacific Island nations we are also currently considering new type of facility which we think fits into the Pacific scenario better. Instead of incinerators, we are also thinking of introducing 'pyrolysis technology facility'.

During the Business Matching Seminar in Suva last October, when we brought 19 Japanese companies to network with Fijian counterparts, the 'pyrolysis technology facility' was discussed with the participants. It does not burn waste, but adds heat with high temperature without oxygen and plastic waste becomes fuel and other things become charcoal. You even do not have to separate waste for this facility. Environmentally friendly, less costly and easier maintenance. This is just an example.

I am pleased to say that these are not only challenges, but could become new opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and transformation.

The Government of Japan has been putting more efforts on the enhancement of waste management in Fiji and the wider region. Recently, in collaboration with UNIDO, we started a 4 year project on circular economy and with UNEP we started

another project on improving plastic waste management in Fiji.

We, the Embassy of Japan here in Suva have been exploring with the Japanese Ministry of Environment on what we could do more in this region, and in the wider Pacific islands, together with the UN and other international organizations towards taking waste management to greater heights and facilitating the smooth flow of circular economies.

Without taking more of your time, I conclude here by wishing you all a meaningful 5 day workshop and I look forward to further collaboration with all the countries and organizations you are representing respectively.

Thank you very much.

Vinaka Vakalevu, Thank You and Arigato Gozaimau.