

# Speech Transcripts

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June 15, 2022

## **Message by Special Advisor to the President (former President) Kitaoka Shinichi at the event celebrating Samoa's 60<sup>th</sup> independence anniversary and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of JICA volunteers in Samoa**

Her Excellency the Ambassador of Samoa to Japan,  
Honorable Chairman of the Japan-Samoa Parliamentary Association,  
Honorable Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan,  
Distinguished guests

It is my honor to join you in celebrating Samoa's 60<sup>th</sup> independence anniversary today. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation for the opportunity to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the JICA Volunteer Program for Samoa at this memorable gathering. Furthermore, it is my great pleasure to be here with Ambassador Sila, whom I have known since we worked closely together as members of Asian nations group at the United Nations in the mid-2000s.

I visited Samoa for the first time as JICA President in April 2018. Before that, I had known the beauty of Samoa through the works of Robert Louis Stevenson and Margaret Mead. So, when I visited Samoa, I was so impressed and I have held Samoa in high regard ever since. I am delighted to speak about this beautiful country today with you all.

In recent years, achieving a free and open maritime order based on the rule of law and enhancing connectivity within the region has become increasingly critical. Also, by eliminating various threats including the severe security environment and climate risks, we can accomplish this goal of stability and prosperity together.

Today, Samoa has become not only a leader of Polynesian nations, but also a central hub for region-wide cooperation among Pacific Island Countries. Moreover, Samoa has played a key role in PALM, the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting since its beginning.

Next year, 2023, will mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Samoa and Japan. As the island nations connected by the Pacific Ocean, Samoa is one of Japan's most valued partners among the region. We share the same values of freedom and human rights, and have maintained friendly relations since Samoa's independence. The relationship between the two countries continues to grow in strength and consequence.

JICA's cooperation with Samoa began in 1972 with the dispatch of a Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer, which was the 15th ever dispatch of volunteer and the first to a Pacific Island Country. In 1988, JICA's Samoa office was established. Since then, JICA has continuously worked in a variety of fields with our primary focus being on the areas of waste management, climate change, and human resource development. Among JICA's operations in Samoa, JOCV, which is celebrating the 50th anniversary of its first dispatch to Samoa, has the strongest presence in the country.

I would like to briefly summarize the history of JOCV operations in Samoa. The first JOCV volunteer, dispatched in 1972, Mr. YAMAKAWA Seiichi, worked as a civil engineer on the construction of the Tanugamanono Diesel Power Station. The power station contributed to the stable electric power supply in Samoa until being decommissioned and replaced by the Diesel Power Plant in Fiaga in 2013.

Since then, we have dispatched a total of 676 volunteers to Samoa to work in a variety of fields including education, health care, construction, environment, IT, and sports. It is our great pleasure that all JOCV activities in these fields benefit the people and are held in high regard by the government of Samoa.

I would also like to share with all of you two remarkable volunteers' stories. The first is the story of Dr. ICHIMORI Kazuyo. She was the first female volunteer to Samoa. She conducted Lymphatic Filariasis control activities at the Ministry of Health between 1977 and 1979. Filariasis is a parasitic disease transmitted by mosquitos, and it was a critical challenge in Samoa at that time. During her two years as a volunteer, she visited villages with her Samoan colleagues every single day to collect mosquito samples and take care of the many patients suffering from the disease. After completing her two years as a volunteer, she returned to Samoa as a WHO expert in 1992. Since then, she has been making efforts to eliminate neglected tropical diseases around the world.

The second volunteer is Mr. MATSUMURA Takeshi who was assigned to the Samoa Meteorology Division between 2016 and 2018. Together with his colleagues, he developed a Smartphone application called "Samoa Weather," for the purposes of weather forecasting and disaster prevention. This application has been useful for Samoan people and has contributed to the tourism sector in Samoa, since it allows people to receive weather information on a daily basis as well as alerts of upcoming natural disasters.

Unfortunately, all volunteers in Samoa have temporarily returned to Japan because of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we are constantly monitoring the situation in Samoa with the hope of returning our operations to the pre-pandemic level.

Human resource development is a particularly important challenge for the future of Samoa and the region at large. In addition to developing grassroots human resources through the dispatch of volunteers, JICA has thus far accepted 10 future Samoan leaders into the JICA Development Studies Program. This program offers participants the opportunity to learn

about Japan's modernization and development experiences through post-graduate studies at universities in Japan. I look forward to watching these participants grow to play a significant role as leaders in their respective fields, thereby fostering a long-lasting bilateral relationship between Samoa and Japan.

In addition, as a central hub for region-wide cooperation among the Pacific Island Countries, JICA will collaborate with Samoa on capacity building in solid waste management, with the aim of creating a sound circular material society in the region, and on human resource development through the Pacific Climate Change Center.

Together with Samoa, we will diligently apply ourselves to finding solutions to key regional challenges in ways that advance the well-being of the entire region.

Today is an excellent opportunity to reflect on the history of cooperation between our two countries and to deepen the understanding and ties that connect us. We hope that by further strengthening our bilateral relations and promoting mutual understanding, we will ensure an enduring friendship between Japan and Samoa.