

Remarks by Ambassador SOMA Hirohisa
at the Handover Ceremony
for the “Project for Improvement of Water Reservoir in Majuro Atoll
under Japan’s Grant Aid
on Wednesday, October 22, 2025, at 11:00 am
at Katooj Park

Her Excellency Dr. Hilda C. Heine, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands,

Honorable Gerald M. Zackios, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade,

Mr. Damian Capelle, CEO, Majuro Water and Sewer Company,

Ms. ONO Yukari, Resident Representative, JICA Marshall Islands Office,

Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

Iakwe in jibbon

It is my great pleasure to be here this morning for this handover ceremony of the rainwater reservoir under “the Project for the Improvement of Water Reservoir at Majuro Atoll” with Japan’s Grant Aid of two billion and one hundred and sixty-seven million yen (¥2,167,000,000 in total), approximately fourteen and a half million US dollars (\$14,500,000 in total), whose Exchanges of Notes were signed originally in September 2020 and for additional grant in January 2023.

In this occasion, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations on this memorable day and express my heartfelt gratitude for the tireless dedication and cooperation that has been extended by many people involved in the RMI including MWSC(Majuro Water and Sewer Company), traditional leaders, landowners, the communities and Pacific International Inc, as well as all the people and entities of Japanese side, including JICA office, Yachiyo Engineering Corporation and Daiippon Construction.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Water resources are essential for economic and social activities while enhancing resilience to the climate change and natural disasters in the RMI. Given the increasingly unpredictable rainfall patterns of recent years, it is very crucial for the public water services to secure a sufficient water supply for people's daily lives and livelihood. The newly completed water reservoir is expected to increase water storage capacity, strengthen the water supply, especially during the dry season, and extend water distribution hours for families and businesses. In this way, it will help the MWSC meet current and future water demands and prepare for droughts.

Acknowledging climate change as the single greatest existential threat to the people of the RMI, at the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders' Meeting (PALM10) in July 2024, Japan and the PIF leaders highlighted the importance of “Climate Change and Disasters” as one of the seven (7) priority areas of cooperation. Japan also announced its new “Pacific Climate Resilience Initiative” to address climate and disaster risks in the Pacific region. As part of the effort to fulfill its commitment,

Japan also announced its contribution of three million US dollars (\$3,000,000 in total) to the Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF) in March this year.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The water reservoir reflects Japan's "Quality Infrastructure Investment" principles, aiming to "maximize the positive impact of infrastructure to achieve sustainable growth and development", particularly in two key aspects.

One is to "raise economic efficiency in view of life-cycle costs". Although the construction cost may be higher than those of more affordable options, the total infrastructure cost is more cost-effective when considering overall operation and maintenance. The Majuro Bridge is a good example. Built in March 1983, it is still in good condition and will remain so for at least another 15 years, according to the recent JICA evaluation mission.

The other aspect is to "integrate environmental considerations in infrastructure investments." In considering the impact on ecosystems, the reservoir employs gentle-slope coastal protection on the ocean side. This showcases a sustainable solution for mitigating the effects of climate change, particularly sea level rise. Unlike vertical seawalls, this gentle-slope coastal protection resembles the natural coastal topography, aiding natural land formation and promoting the development of new ecosystems.

It is noteworthy that the project was completed without any incidents or delays. Despite the breakdowns of some essential heavy machinery and weeks of suspended work awaiting spare parts and repairs, it is remarkable that the project managed to finish all the work on time. The record of over 174,000 hours of incident-free operation (not a single incident for over 18 months) is also notable, considering the installation of 4-6-ton rocks and other risky construction works. All construction workers should be applauded for their unwavering commitment to "Security First", which was reinforced through daily morning assemblies and monthly safety gatherings. This reservoir is a testament to those commendable achievements that resulted from the day-to-day, hand-to-hand collaboration between Japanese and Marshallese workers, build on mutual understanding, trust and a shared goal.

In light of these facts, I would like to conclude my remarks by proudly presenting this newly completed water reservoir as a symbol of genuine public infrastructure "of the people, by the people, for the people" in the RMI.

Jerammon and Kommol tata