

JAPAN AND THE PACIFIC REGION IN COOPERATION

Shinsaku Hogen

I General Remarks

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here this afternoon, participating in this panel discussion on "The Pacific Region in the 1980's — searching for cooperation in diversity." I think it is most appropriate to discuss about the cooperation in the Pacific region in the 80's, the region being most active and seeking for further development towards the twenty-first century. Today, I wish to give some of my personal observation on "Japan and the Pacific Region in Cooperation."

First of all I would like to mention some basic facts concerning our economic assistance. As most of you who are present here this afternoon know already, Japan set its target of doubling its ODA (Official Development Assistance) in the three years beginning 1978. In 1978, Japan's ODA was U.S.\$2.2 billion; thus the idea is to double it by the end of the F.Y. 1980. I am happy to say that this target is being achieved and I understand the Government is setting another target to further increase this ODA in the future.

So far, Japan's ODA has been directed mainly to the countries of Asia. In fact, in 1979, the share of the Asian region in the Japan's total ODA accounted for some 69%. Therefore when we speak about Japan's economic cooperation to the countries of the South Pacific I must frankly admit that the sum has been very small. To explain more in detail, Japan's ODA to the South Pacific countries amounted to U.S.\$4.6 million in 1978, which accounted for only 0.3% of our total ODA. This might indicate the fact that our economic cooperation to the region has only begun, thus the performance has been small. However one im-

portant aspect is that in 1979 Japan's ODA to these countries became U.S.\$13.6 million, which in terms of absolute value is an increase of U.S.\$9 million. In other words, in one single year, our economic cooperation to the region almost tripled, and I think for the fiscal year 1980 this trend is continuing. In one word, Japan's economic aid to the countries of the South Pacific is rapidly increasing and I think this illustrates the recognition on the Japanese side of the importance of the developing relations with these countries.

II Cooperation for Nation Building

When we consider the region taking country by country, one immediately notices that the countries in the region are all new either having achieved their independence in the past decade or two or only in the recent few years. There are a few common aspects among these countries: (1) they are all island countries with relatively small population. (2) All these countries are politically rather stable. They do not opt for rapid political change, rather they carry out the British Commonwealth type of stable political system. (3) Their economy is based either on agriculture or on fisheries. (4) All these countries are eager to develop human resources, i.e. promoting their educational systems. I think these are common features of the countries of the South Pacific. Japan, bearing in mind these elements, is eager to assist them in their nation-building. This is best reflected in our aid performance. More than two thirds of Japan's aid to these countries have been either in the field of agriculture or fisheries development, or of human resources development.

I think following examples are of some interest. For PNG, Japan disbursed \$3 million in 1975 for the establishment of the National Fisheries Training College. The biggest item of our grant aid to Fiji in the F.Y. 79 - 80 was the presentation of our fisheries training vessels which amounted to \$2.5 million. For the Solomon Islands, we are assisting them in their fisheries research and training program also in the amount of some \$2.5 million. For Tonga, a grant aid of \$1.8 million has been given for the fisheries development. For Kiribati, \$2.5 million is given in the form of a grant aid for their fisheries promotion program and

for their refrigerating facilities. For Western Samoa, we are about to conclude an agreement for a grant aid of \$3 million for their fish landing facilities.

In the field of human resources development, we are helping them in building some educational facilities or giving them educational and sport equipments. For example, we have just agreed with Western Samoa to build an agricultural training center in Asia. In Tonga, agreements have already been made to build a primary school and I understand it will be completed within this year. For any nation to establish itself, it is most important to improve its educational system. Japan speaks of this from its own experience. In this regard, together with building educational facilities in these countries, we are eagerly receiving many trainees and also we are dispatching experts to these countries for improvement of their educational and technical know-how. JICA, the central organization for carrying out Japan's technical cooperation, has so far dispatched 31 specialists and 61 Japan Overseas Youth Volunteers to this region.

I am sure that person-to-person contacts of this nature will greatly contribute not only to improving the technical knowledge of the youth in the Pacific but also to deepening the wider range of understanding. As I have said, these countries' putting emphasis on improvement of agriculture and fisheries and also on the education of their youths is the appropriate policy for the building of their young nations. I am sure that the Japanese Government is fully prepared to assist in their efforts.

III Recent Reactions of the Pacific Island Countries toward Japan

So far I have stated the intentions of the Japanese side regarding our relations with these countries. Now I wish to touch upon the reactions expressed by these island countries themselves and the recent developments.

The year 1980 has been the year when approaches from these countries have been most phenomenal of the past. There have been many visits to Japan by many leaders of the region. The visit to Japan by Prime Minister Kamisese Mara of Fiji opened a new chapter of Japan's relations with the region. The visit to Japan by the Prime Minister of

Western Samoa, Mr. Tupuola Efi, paved another important path for our relations. I think it must be mentioned here that as a result of Fiji's Prime Minister's visit, the Government of Fiji decided to open their embassy in Tokyo. I understand this is the sixth diplomatic mission they have established overseas, and when we give thoughts to Japan-Fiji relations of the past, this new development is a tremendous initiative taken by the Fijian side. Many cabinet ministers from other countries of the region visited Japan in 1980. I think these exchanges will be accelerated for the future.

Another important development is the opening of the direct air services between Japan and the South Pacific. JAL and Air New Zealand began their air services between Narita and Auckland in July of last year, making a stop-over in Fiji. The two airlines, by making a stop-over in Fiji, give a significant impact not only upon Japan's relations with the Pacific but also upon the countries of the South Pacific by giving them opportunities to take more direct interest in Japan. I am sure that through the opening of such air services, visitors from the South Pacific will increase.

IV Regional Cooperation

When one discusses the developments in the Pacific, regional cooperation taking place in the South Pacific must not be neglected. Such regional organizations as the South Pacific Forum (SPF) or the South Pacific Commission (SPC) must be highly regarded as an effort of these countries to consolidate themselves and to strengthen their identity as a Region. Various efforts that have been undertaken by the SPF such as the creation of Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) or the establishment of the University of the South Pacific (USP) well illustrate their aspirations for the better nation-building of the member island countries. The FFA's goal is to make best use of fisheries resources in the region. The very fact that USP is extending their educational activities by setting up branches in many of the island countries also indicates their aspirations for developing human resources. I value highly these regional efforts undertaken by the Pacific countries and I wish to advise the Japanese Govern-

ment to make efforts so that not only economic assistance on the bilateral level but also aid to these multilateral organizations be improved.

V Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept

When we talk about the regional cooperation, the concept which was introduced by the late Prime Minister Ohira, namely the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept, must always be mentioned. As you know, the late Mr. Ohira introduced this concept as one of his policy guidelines and stipulated the importance of further cooperation in the Pacific Basin. I hesitate to talk about this in depth since Prof. Kojima who is one of the authorities on the concept is here today. Therefore, I will limit myself to simply mentioning my understanding of the concept. To my understanding, the idea is to have a broader cooperation amongst the countries surrounding the Pacific Ocean in the field of economy, culture, and social affairs. This is a very dynamic and broad concept entailing such countries as the United States, Canada, Japan, the ASEAN countries, Australia, New Zealand and the island countries in the South Pacific. I think it is our common recognition that the Pacific Basin will be an area which will have most dynamism and most active developments in every field in the 21st century. I think you will also agree with me that cooperation among countries of the region is indispensable for the peace and stability of the entire world. The concept, however, must be based on a long-term perspective, and trying to reach any rash conclusion may be hazardous to the realization of the concept. As the island countries of the South Pacific pointed out, this concept must be worked out carefully so that all countries concerned may be happily participated.

Nevertheless, the fact that Japan proposed this concept clearly illustrates that she is taking an interest in the development of the Pacific region, and I am sure that the concept will be further pursued not only by the experts but also by the Government of Japan.

VI Concluding Remarks

As I have outlined, Japan's intentions to cooperate for the develop-

ment in the Pacific is growing year by year. This can be seen by Japan's increased bilateral economic assistance to the countries in the region and by her cooperation with the multilateral organizations of the region. It can also be seen in Japan's own proposals such as the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept. All these aspects take a different form yet are based on one consistent thinking that the well-being of the Pacific is to be enhanced. My five years' experience as the President of JICA convinced me that without the well-being of the Pacific Region, the well-being of the entire world will not be achieved.