

Speech by H.E. Keiichi Hayashi,  
Ambassador of Japan to the Court of St James's,  
to Members of the English Speaking Union  
at Dartmouth House, London W1  
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It is a great honour to speak at the English Speaking Union today. Of course, it is a daunting task for any non-native speaker to address this prestigious body in English, but particularly so for someone that has not had the privilege of a formal education in the UK.

England was where I had my first ever experience of living abroad, albeit very briefly, while I was a university student in Kyoto. Therefore, when I was about to join the Foreign Service and the Director of the Personnel Division asked me where I would hope to be sent as a language trainee, without hesitation-I said the UK, adding that because of my brief stay here I had come to love the country and hoped one day to be able to speak like an Oxbridge graduate.

I still do not know whether the Personnel Director at that time had the semi-divine revelation that I would eventually have two assignments in London, including the ambassadorship.

I was appointed Ambassador last January, just two months before the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami.

Britain's support for Japan in the aftermath of the disaster was simply wonderful. The Government and people of the UK wasted no time in responding, for instance through a 63-man and two-dog search-and-rescue mission and in the form of fund-raising activities all around the country.

In June, a memorial service for the victims of the earthquake and tsunami was held at Westminster Abbey and attended by nearly two thousand people. It was the first time for a service to be held for Japan in that magnificent location, where the Royal Wedding had taken place just over a month before.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people, including many members of the ESU, who have been and still are involved in various humanitarian activities for their generosity and goodwill.

I recently visited Fukushima Prefecture together with some of my colleagues who had attended an annual heads of mission conference held in

Tokyo. We had a chance to speak with the Governor of the prefecture, the Mayor of Soma City and many others directly involved in crisis management in the immediate aftermath of the disaster and now engaged in the formidable challenge of reconstruction work. They were all so grateful for the robust support that had been given by people around the world and yet talked so eloquently about the pressing need for continued assistance.

The physical damage was still evident in what we saw along the beach at Soma. For instance, the sight of the big steel pillars of a building that used to house a fish market, twisted and squeezed like candy bars, and the square concrete foundations of what must have been private residences were stark testimony to the enormity of the power of nature, leaving us with a humble sense of powerlessness.

In addition, there is the massive task of removing the fear of radiation. We visited a model site for decontamination work, which occupies an area of 10 hectares, or about 25 acres. It has taken three months and more than one hundred workers to measure the level of radiation and try out many different techniques and technologies for decontamination, including the scraping-off of the surface soil, water-jet washing of roofs and walls, and cutting and pruning of trees, in order to find the most efficient and effective cleansing methods. The authorities regularly measure the levels of radiation at four thousand points – every two square metres in residential areas and every ten square metres in other areas. This may well be more deliberate and careful than is necessary because it is a model project, but the fact remains that it takes a huge amount of work for such a small area, only one tenth of a square kilometer, while the whole prefecture covers nearly 14,000 square kilometers. We were simply awe-struck by the size of the task ahead.

When we were at the site, we felt a little tense at first. One of our colleagues had brought a radiation dose counter and kept checking the level throughout our visit. Actually, it never went far beyond one micro-sievert, well below the hazardous level.

The situation was obviously not easy, but we all were heartened by the

determination the local people were showing in their attempts to overcome such a difficult situation.

At the end of the meeting, the Governor presented us with beautiful, large strawberries produced in Fukushima. The prefecture's produce had been shunned by some people and prices had plunged, even though there was nothing wrong with it in terms of quality and safety. The Governor wanted us to convey to the world that, despite the enormous difficulty the prefecture was faced with, their products distributed through the market were as safe and sound as before. I can testify that they were safe and deliciously sweet.

In the municipal office of Soma, there were hundreds of name tags pinned on the walls of the rooms and corridors. They bore the names of those who had provided support, material and financial, to this small city of 36,000 residents, which had lost about 500 people through the tsunami. The aid had come from all over the world. The local officials wanted to recognize each and every piece of help they had received as they were really heartened by the scope and strength of this support. At the same time, it was obvious they remained in dire need of continued help.

In our efforts for reconstruction, of course, it is of vital importance that our economy keeps growing so that we can finance the enormous expenditure required primarily by ourselves. For that purpose, Japan needs to ensure the healthy growth of its international trade and investment. In this respect the UK has been and will remain one of Japan's most significant partners..

We share the common creed of pursuing prosperity through open and free trade in a global environment of peace and stability. We enjoy very dynamic economic ties, which are symbolised by the huge volume of Japanese direct investment over the last three decades, which in cumulative terms amounts to £24 billion.

The number of Japanese companies operating in the UK totals nearly 1,300, and they have created more than 130,000 jobs. More than half the cars

exported from the UK are made by Japanese automobile companies.

In order to boost both the Japanese and British economies, the conclusion of a Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement is of paramount importance. Thanks to the strong support of the UK, emphatically voiced by Prime Minister Cameron himself, Japan and the EU agreed to start the process for negotiations for an EPA last May and are having discussions to define the scope of the negotiations. The conclusion of such an agreement will encourage further Japanese inward investment into the UK, and vice versa.

Furthermore, Japan and the UK have been working together on a wide range of pressing global issues such as security in Afghanistan, UN Security Council reform, ODA in Africa, anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia and peace in the Middle East, as well as nuclear safety and non-proliferation. In the coming years, we will continue to work together for the peace and prosperity of our own countries and regions as well as that of the international community as a whole.

We look forward to Prime Minister Cameron's first visit to Japan in the early part of this year so that we can issue a joint statement that places our bilateral relationship on an even more solid footing and upgrades our cooperation.

Because of the difficulties Japan is faced with, not only those related to the frequent and severe natural disasters to which we are prone but also the long-term problems of an ageing and shrinking population, the massive fiscal deficit and perennial political crises, the term "Japanisation" seems to have entered our contemporary lexicon in a way which portrays Japan as the antithesis of a role model for growth and prosperity.

However, I take issue with the idea that following in Japan's footsteps is necessarily a bad thing. History offers numerous examples of cases in which challenges never experienced previously have precipitated the birth of new concepts and technological advances. This has repeatedly been the case in Japan. Through its search for a way forward in truly daunting

circumstances, Japan should be prepared to play the role of a front-runner and provide a model for the world.

As the Great Bard observed in *As You Like It*:

“Sweet are the uses of adversity,  
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,  
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.”

Whether we like it or not, we are no doubt in a difficult situation with our fiscal condition being “ugly” and the radiation issue certainly “venomous”. However, we are inclined to try to change such adversity into a jewel.

Will we be able to succeed? Well, being a diplomat, I almost always have to remain cautious, hedging this way and that, but as Sir Winston Churchill said: “The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”

In this optimistic spirit I am convinced that Japan will embark on tackling the present challenges so that once again “Japanisation” will become something that other countries aspire to achieve. Moreover, I am equally convinced that the United Kingdom will be walking side by side with us in our pursuit of such economic and social reinvigoration.