

As delivered

**Speech at a Dinner to celebrate the Japan Society's 125th Anniversary and
the Bestowal on the Society of
the Foreign Minister's Commendation
at the Royal Institute of British Architects, London W1
by Ambassador Koji Tsuruoka
on Wednesday 2 November 2016**

Thank you, Heidi [Potter], for your introduction. Sir John [Major], thank you very much for the very insightful speech. Sir David [Warren], who works very closely chairing the Society, and I am here to celebrate with you the longevity of our wonderful organisation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a really great honour to mark with you today in my official capacity the 125th anniversary of the establishment of the Japan Society. As soon as I arrived in London, which is about five months ago, Sir David and Heidi visited me at the Embassy and provided me with a full briefing on the long history and impressive achievements of the Japan Society. Why did they do that? Because a new Japanese Ambassador could hardly come to London without any friends and without knowing about the achievements of the Society. And with the support of the Japan Society, I am very lucky to have some great friends now!

The modern relationship between the United Kingdom and Japan goes back well over a century, and as you aware this Society, which was established in 1891, has been a major player in the evolution of our partnership. The menu on the table describes something that I wasn't aware of, which is that His Majesty the Emperor Meiji provided the Society with a grant in 1892, just one year after it was founded. I have done a bit of research and found that there are quite a few Japan Societies around the world, but that this is the only one to have received such an imperial endowment. And, of course, because we are in the United Kingdom with its long-established monarchy, it is very appropriate that the imperial family of the Meiji throne played a part in nurturing and promoting the Japan Society here. And over the years the Society came to play a major role on

a number of important imperial visits. One notable case concerned the then-Crown Prince's official visit, which took place in 1921, while the Society did likewise when the current Emperor visited the UK in 1998. On these two occasions, the Japan Society was at the forefront of the arrangements to welcome Their Majesties.

For its long service over so many years, the Japan Society well deserves to receive the Foreign Minister's Commendation. This symbol of Foreign Minister Kishida's appreciation is, of course, a sign of recognition at the highest level of the Society's invaluable contribution to the warm friendship that unites our two countries. So, in a spirit of profound gratitude for everything the Society has done over the past century and a quarter, I am delighted to present to Sir David, the Chairman of the Japan Society, the Foreign Minister's Commendation. Congratulations!

I am very lucky indeed to be in London on this very happy day, and to be able to present this Commendation to the most important association of its kind in the UK. I look forward to seeing the Society and, of course, our bilateral relations continue to thrive in the years ahead. Thank you very much.