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***Reception to mark the Awarding of the Ambassador's Commendation to
Japan400***

**Opening Remarks by Ambassador Keiichi Hayashi
at the Embassy of Japan
on Wednesday 9 April 2014**

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, My Friends,

Thank you for coming to the Embassy today. The whole purpose of this occasion is to express my sincere gratitude to Japan400 for its tremendous contribution to the further promotion of mutual understanding between the peoples of Japan and the UK with the magnificent series of events it organized to commemorate the passage of 400 years since the arrival of *The Clove* in Hirado.

Captain John Saris was dispatched by King James I to seek trade, and succeeded in opening formal contacts with Japan when the Shogun Tokugawa Hidetada conferred on him a *Shuinjo*, or “red-sealed letter”, granting his countrymen permission to live and trade throughout Japan. He would be really astonished to see how his first adventurous step hugely developed relations between Japan and the UK over the ensuing 400 years, not only in the commercial area but also in all other fields including culture, science, technology and lifestyle. This landmark moment in history was celebrated in 2013 at a number of events and at different levels, in both countries.

In fact, nearly two hundred and fifty events covering almost every area of our bilateral interaction were executed with the logo of Japan400, reaching new audiences far and wide. Two hundred and fifty! That amounts to almost one every working day! Moreover, there were even cases of 20 events in a single day! Some of the programmes were truly comprehensive, as I witnessed on the occasion of “Voyage through Words and Music” held on 11 June at All Saints Parish Church in Fulham, where Captain Saris rests. Local school pupils gathered to enjoy Japanese folk music and dancing, and some families from the local community also attended. The impressive scale of this event, which showcased the power of Japanese culture, would not have been possible without the skill and energy of the organisers.

Japan400 may have been initiated by a relatively small group of Japanophiles, but their determination was supported by so many people who have good will toward Japan, and received funding from more than 20 companies. The venture developed a momentum of its own and became a symbol of the amicable ties between our two countries and of the many friendships between Japanese and British people. We can be very satisfied in hindsight, although I am not sure how many of you were confident in the beginning that Japan400, which did not even have an established office, could grow into such a stunning success. I have heard that some volunteers, who all had jobs of their own, devoted as many as 400 hours of their own time to Japan400 over the year. Although perhaps less hazardous than the voyage across the world undertaken four centuries ago by those hardy souls on board *The Clove*, that is true

dedication!

That is why I appreciate all the more the efforts of all the people involved who got together under the leadership of the Co-chairs, Mr Nicolas Maclean and Professor Timon Screech – who, by the way, seem to have missed a golden opportunity to indulge in cosplay with an outfit of 400 years ago! For my part, I dressed in a Choshu Five costume at the Japan Matsuri at Trafalgar Square! Anyway, I would like to take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to all the members of the Executive Committee, Steering Committee and Media Group who made it happen.

It is thus my great pleasure to award through the Co-Chairs the Japanese Ambassador's Commendation to Japan400 in appreciation of all these wonderful events.

Thank you.