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Japan-UK Robotics Seminar
Opening Remarks by Ambassador Keiichi Hayashi
at the Embassy of Japan
on Wednesday 22 April 2015

Mr Imazato, Dr Pegman, Professor Asama, Professor Lane, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome all of you to today's "Japan-UK Robotics Seminar", which brings together key representatives from government, academia and industry of our two countries on a most timely topic: that is, the new landscape of robotics research and future Japan-UK collaboration.

Fortunately or unfortunately, I will not be replaced by a famous Japanese humanoid robot today. But I believe that many people here have seen through the media Japanese humanoid robots that can walk, run and talk, and autonomous industrial robot systems at manufacturing sites. Since the 1980s, Japan has led the world as the "Robotics Superpower" in various fields such as robot production and utilisation with the focus on manufacturing, in which Japan excels. Meanwhile, in line with technological innovation, including Big Data analytics and the Internet of Things, as well as changes in business models, global competition regarding robotics is intensifying. With these developments in mind, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe launched the "Robot Revolution Realisation Council" last September. The council discussed specific measures, including the development of technology, regulatory reforms and the global standardisation of Japan's robot technologies, and published a report entitled "Japan's New Robot Strategy" in January.

Meanwhile, I understand the British Government has also prioritised "robotics and autonomous systems" as one of the eight great technologies. Furthermore, a strategy for stimulating growth in Britain's robotics and autonomous systems industry has been published by an official special interest group chaired by Professor David Lane, who will speak about the research and development in robotics in Britain later this afternoon.

Clearly, in order to ensure economic growth in an aging society, both Japan and the UK have to tackle the challenges of improving productivity. Our two governments recognise the need to support R&D so as to keep our robotics industries at the forefront of global endeavours in the field. I trust Mr Imazato and Dr Pegman will address this subject in more detail later. Researchers in both the UK and Japan have recorded some notable achievements in both academia and industry. I am confident that competition and cooperation between our two countries to promote both research and practical applications will lead to significant future benefits for our societies.

This is why we at the Embassy decided to host this evening's event by taking advantage

of the visit to the UK of the eminent Japanese robotics researcher, Professor Hajime Asama, with the aim of fostering further Japan-UK collaboration in robotics. Today's event will feature keynote speeches introducing recent policy and research trends regarding robotics in the UK and Japan. The speeches will be followed by discussion on potential innovation and business collaboration between the UK and Japan as well as networking opportunities for the participants, including not only researchers but also people representing industry and government.

I would like this year to be the starting point of what we might call a robot revolution involving our two countries. Finally, it is my sincere hope that all of you will make the most of the opportunities provided by this event. I trust the evening will feature excellent presentations and animated discussions as well as providing an ideal occasion for lively networking, thereby giving a further boost to cooperation between our two countries in the important fields of science, technology and innovation.

Thank you.