

**Speech on the Occasion of the Bestowal of  
the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun  
upon Sir Stephen Gomersall  
at the Embassy of Japan  
by Ambassador Keiichi Hayashi  
on Friday 5 June 2015**

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to today's ceremony as we confer upon Sir Stephen Gomersall the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun in recognition of his significant contribution to strengthening and developing relations between Japan and the United Kingdom.

As all of you will know, Sir Stephen's achievements are both numerous and varied, not only through his many years at the British Embassy in Tokyo but also through his work since joining the Hitachi Group. Let me introduce to you some of his outstanding contributions as we look back on his long and distinguished career in Japan and the United Kingdom.

After joining the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1970, Sir Stephen's first foreign assignment was to Japan from 1972 to '77. He served there again from 1986 to '90, and then as Ambassador from 1999 to 2004. During this time Sir Stephen played an invaluable role promoting policy dialogue between Japan and the UK, including organising four Prime Ministerial visits and his work related to the Japan-UK 21st Century Group. His efforts here helped to develop trade and investment between Japan and the UK and to strengthen the bilateral partnership in the international arena.

On retirement from the Foreign Service, he took on a new challenge by joining the Hitachi Group in October 2004. He must have made a most effective use of his network and his negotiating skill cultivated through 34 years in diplomacy as he was quickly promoted to the post of Chief Executive for Europe, and, in two years, became the first non-Japanese Executive Officer at Hitachi, Ltd, the world scale conglomerate in manufacturing, before being appointed Group Chairman for Europe in April 2011. His promotion in Hitachi seemed to be speedier than when he was in the Foreign Service.

There was a reason. During this time, Sir Stephen has contributed to advancing Hitachi's global business operations, especially in the UK, where he has played an important role in the company's remarkable thrust into the railway infrastructure and nuclear power sectors.

The Hitachi Group had begun its full-scale entry into the British market in the 1980s, but since Sir Stephen joined, he has helped to double Hitachi's European market share. Sir Stephens' human network and negotiating skill must have contributed to strengthening its vital partnership with the British government and industry.

One striking example is in the area of railways, where Hitachi Rail Europe was granted contracts by DOT for the Intercity Express Programme in 2012, in which Hitachi is to

provide 866 trains in total and to service them for 30 years. It has led to the construction of a rolling stock manufacturing facility in Newton Aycliffe, County Durham. This September the factory there will start manufacturing the IEP's train carriages to be proudly marked as "made in the UK" with Japanese technology. This must be a pinnacle of Japan-UK business cooperation, which Sir Stephen had pursued throughout his diplomatic career.

In addition, again under the Chairmanship of Sir Stephen, Hitachi Europe decided to acquire Horizon Nuclear Power Ltd in October 2012 in order to build new nuclear power plants at Wylfa, in North Wales, and Oldbury, in the West Midlands. The renewal of the nuclear power infrastructure through building new reactors now constitutes a central pillar for the UK's energy policy and its climate change policy. Hitachi's entry into the British nuclear market through the purchase of Horizon Nuclear Power will provide the necessary technological basis in this vital area. In this sense it was another significant step forward in Japan-UK business cooperation.

In parallel with Sir Stephen's decoration by the Japanese Emperor, Mr Hiroaki Nakanishi, the Chairman and CEO of Hitachi Ltd, has recently been awarded an Honorary Knighthood from Her Majesty The Queen in recognition of his distinguished services to UK-Japanese business relationship.

Is this mere coincidence or well-coordinated moves by the two Governments? Well, I cannot and should not say that there has been collusion between Ambassador Hitchens and me. All I can say is that it is not a sheer coincidence. It does represent a shared recognition of Hitachi's huge contribution to our bilateral economic relationship and the shared blessings on Hitachi's robust business in the UK by both the Japanese and British Governments. Sir Stephen certainly has acted as a bridge in our relationship.

To sum up, Sir Stephen has made a sterling contribution to UK-Japan relations for many years. In light of his outstanding service, it now gives me great pleasure to present Sir Stephen Gomersall with this very well-deserved Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun.

I am sure not only all of you here but also many in Japan and the UK will join me in this celebration.

Thank you very much and many congratulations.