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***The Invest in Japan: Mie Business Seminar and Exchange Meetings***  
**Opening Remarks by Ambassador Keiichi Hayashi**  
**at the Embassy of Japan**  
**on Monday 6 July 2015**

Governor, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to the Embassy of Japan for this seminar to promote investment in Mie Prefecture, whose Governor, Mr Eikei Suzuki, and his team are here to make the case.

I know the seminar will be exciting enough to keep me awake, but I should be careful not to fall asleep during MY speech, after watching Japan's final game in the FIFA Women's World Cup against the USA on TV until two o'clock this morning. Japan and England now share commiseration and pride in finishing in second and third place respectively.

In fact, Japan and the UK share so much and, among other things, the state of mutually beneficial economic ties between our two countries is excellent. The increase in Japanese direct investment in the UK from £1.4bn in 2009 to £8.6bn in 2013 is a symbol of the strength of our relationship.

But what about British direct investment in Japan? Although the UK ranks around fifth as a source of foreign direct investment in Japan, its direct investment there has fallen in recent years. Considering the fact that the UK's total overseas investment has averaged approximately £31 billion annually over the last five years, there is huge potential to boost the UK's stature in Japan in this regard.

The Government of Japan considers foreign direct investment into Japan as an important pillar of its growth strategy and is aiming at doubling the FDI stock to 35 trillion yen, or about 183 billion pounds, by the year 2020. During his visit to the UK last May, Prime Minister Abe made a direct appeal to British business leaders at an investment seminar held at the Institute of Directors in London. In fact, Governor Suzuki himself also participated in this event and urged British businesses to direct their attention to Japan – and in particular, of course, to Mie.

As you will surely hear in more convincing terms later from the Governor and his team, Mie is a place with great appeal for business and investment as part of the Central Japan industrial area centred on the megalopolis of Nagoya. But this is only one aspect of Mie, which in Japanese literally means triple-layered; in fact it has abundant, multiple resources in history, natural beauty and tasty food, too.

My first visit to Mie Prefecture was back in the early 1960s. It was a primary school graduation trip. I must admit that it was not my own choice, but nobody questioned the decision because a visit to the Ise Shrine in the prefecture had long been considered a once-in-a-life-time pilgrimage for every Japanese. The Shrine in Ise is THE shrine of Japan, being the most ancient and of the highest standing in the country. The trip was to

pay homage to our nation's history.

I have subsequently visited Mie a couple more times, but for different reasons. Once for a gourmet reason, to savour the triple treat of the best abalone steak, the best beef sukiyaki, and the best *Ise-ebi* lobster. Another visit was for sightseeing in Shima, enjoying the staggering beauty of green islands in the sapphire-blue sea against the cobalt-blue sky. When I was last in Ise two years ago, the preparations for the Shikinen Sengu were taking place. That is the reconstruction of the sanctuaries of the shrine, which has been carried out every 20 years for more than 1,300 years. It is a fascinating, time-honoured process representing the constant renewal of the seat of the Gods.

I understand that Governor Suzuki has just visited Lough Erne. This is not because he loves golf but, more importantly, because Mie Prefecture has been nominated as the place to host next year's G-7 leaders' meeting, called the Ise-Shima G-7 Summit, which will take place on May 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. It will be an excellent opportunity to globally promote Mie, including Ise-shima. I hope that the international attention Mie receives through the G-7 Summit will trigger a much greater number of tourists and much more direct investment there, not least from the UK.

Ise is actually the ancient name for Mie, and since ancient times has been closely associated with a legendary divine wind. Let me conclude by expressing the hope that this seminar and the G7 Summit will serve as a divine tailwind to bring about more investment in Mie and Japan.

Thank you very much.