

Check against delivery

**Speech at the UK-Japan Geological Society Collaboration Symposium  
by Ambassador Keiichi Hayashi  
at the Embassy of Japan  
on Friday 25 September 2015**

Lord St Andrews, Professors Manning and Iryu, Ladies & Gentlemen,  
It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to this reception to conclude today's UK-Japan Geological Society Collaboration Symposium. It has taken place at the right time as we just saw last weekend a tectonic change here in England. That was in the world of rugby and triggered tsunami waves of joy in Japan as it sank an invictus plate in South Africa. But unlike 8,000 years ago, Scotland was spared a tsunami this time.

This year's symposium was in honour of Arthur Holmes, one of Britain's greatest geologists. Frankly speaking, I did not know about Arthur Holmes – not even the fact that he pioneered the use of radioactive dating of minerals. But as someone who was and still is fascinated by Alfred Wegener's "continental drift theory", I was impressed to know that Holmes eagerly espoused Wegener's claim at a time when it was unpopular and regarded as dead by most scholars by positing the theory of mantle convection, which is now widely accepted.

Holmes was a committed scientist who engaged in painstaking research in the areas of science that moved him. Just like him, pioneering, devoted geoscientists like all of you here are contributing greatly to predicting, preventing and reducing hazards and risks caused by natural disasters such as tsunamis.

At the time of the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami, I did not doubt the widespread assumption that the phenomenon of tsunamis had little relevance for the UK. However, I have since learned that Scotland experienced a 20-metre-high tsunami back in 6,100 BC and that, following the earthquake in Lisbon in 1755, a tsunami of around three metres hit the south-west coast of England.

When the tsunami struck Tohoku in 2011, I felt how unlucky Japan was to be in an area plagued by earthquakes and tsunamis. But now it has come home to me that tsunamis pose a threat not just to Japan and its neighbours but also to almost all coastal regions in the world. Therefore, I now realise that Japan needs to collaborate with countries like the UK, which has a long history of geological study.

Through research and development we can learn more about the risks and restrict the damage that tsunamis cause, and find ways to mitigate its effects. For this to succeed requires collaboration on a global scale.

In this context, Japan is now advocating the establishment of a World Tsunami Day on 5 November. It was on that date around a century ago that the inhabitants of a Japanese village were saved from a huge tsunami because one alert villager quickly sent a warning signal with smoke created by setting fire to rice-straw stacks. That incident still teaches us the importance of early warnings. But perhaps today we can be a little more scientific and efficient. I do hope you geologists will soon find ways to precisely detect the early signs of

earthquakes and tsunamis.

May I offer my thanks to all of you here tonight who are combining your efforts to expand our knowledge of this important subject, especially to the Geological Society of London and that of Japan, as well as to the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, which has provided vital financial support in promoting research collaboration between our two countries. It is our sincere hope that today's symposium and reception will not only bring together geoscientists and risk assessors but will also pile up layers of cooperation of seismic scale in science and technology between Japan and the UK. Thank you.