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**Speech at the Regional Event highlighting Japanese Investment to
Northeast England (Dinner),
Lumley Castle, Durham
by Ambassador Keiichi Hayashi
on Thursday 15 October 2015**

Distinguished Members of Parliament, Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening.

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to this dinner as we focus on UK-Japan business cooperation in this region.

Japan and the North East of England share so much through our mutually-beneficial economic ties. Our long-standing links date back to the days when the Port of Tyne used to produce naval vessels for Japan, which directly contributed to my country's victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905.

After the low tide of the Japan-UK relationship through WWII and its aftermath, it is now the turn for Japanese companies to come to this country. The first Japanese investment in the UK materialised in 1974, but a more famous story has it that Prime Minister Thatcher persuaded Nissan to make a big investment in Sunderland to build a car plant for exports.

It was opened in 1986 and still remains one of the most successful cases of foreign direct investment in the entire UK. Since the 1980s we have seen hugely active Japanese investment in the North East – so much so that we now observe around 50 Japanese companies operating in the region

The North East of England is an area with a wealth of skills and experience, developed during its long history since the industrial revolution. Moreover, the local population, in addition to being blessed with arguably the most endearing accent in the UK, is both hard-working and friendly!

These local qualities have proved to mix well with Japan's most advanced technology, maintained by a business culture of rigorous discipline and quality investment, thereby leading to the outstanding commercial successes we have witnessed over the past three decades.

The newest addition is Hitachi's £82 million investment to build a railway vehicle factory in Newton Aycliffe. It is from the British Empire that Japan learned to build its railway system. We are happy, therefore, that, in a facility close to Darlington, where the world's first public railway ran 190 years ago, we are now able to combine Hitachi's latest technology with local skills to produce advanced high-speed trains made in Britain. They will ensure fast, safe and comfortable railway travel to all corners of the United Kingdom – and hopefully beyond.

This is a good example of how we can literally build a high-quality, mutually beneficial economic partnership between Japan and the North East of England.

I would also like to add that this relationship between Japan and the North East of England does not have to be limited to the economic area, but should also encompass the cultural and academic fields. We recently welcomed the restart of Japan Studies in Durham University, where Teikyo University's local campus has been operating for the past 25 years. These academic links must be further nurtured and strengthened in order to promote even greater cooperation at the national and regional levels.

We started our business contacts more than a century ago. We have written a remarkable history of solid achievement over the past thirty years. We are now building a future of even greater success in the next thirty years and beyond.

I would like to conclude by declaring to this influential, eminent audience that we will be counting on your continued support and understanding in this evolution, or perhaps revolution, and I hope today's seminar/dinner event has provided positive impetus to this end.

Thank you.