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**Speech at the Opening of Toshiba Gallery of Japanese Art, the V&A  
by Ambassador Keiichi Hayashi  
on Tuesday 3 November 2015**

I am delighted to celebrate with you tonight this happy event of the opening of the newly refurbished Toshiba Gallery of Japanese Art here in this gorgeous setting of the V&A.

Throughout my term as the Ambassador of Japan in the UK, I have had the honour and pleasure to visit a number of exhibitions and events showcased here at the V&A, including many held in the Toshiba Gallery, thus making this museum as one of the most familiar landmarks in London for me.

But this familiarity is never a synonym for repetition or boredom. Each time I come here, the excitement is different and unique. From the traditional kimonos to the avant-garde classics of Issei Miyake, Yoji Yamamoto or Kansai Yamamoto and further to the gothic and Lolita fashions born in the streets, or from the successful conservation of the exquisite Mazarin Chest to the exhibition of finest modern artisan crafts and industrial products, every event has always been unlike any other. I welcome the renewal of this wonderful gallery, where constant innovation is a given.

Over the weekend, we have seen another big event, not in the art but in the sports world: the completion of the exhilarating 2015 Rugby World Cup! The Rugby World Cup made history in many ways. Although Japan failed to proceed to the knockout stage, it contributed to setting the whole tournament alight, by a historic upset.

The Brave Blossoms, widely rated as minnows beat the mighty Springboks in the first match. Defying their handicap in size and weight, thanks to their pace, agility and discipline, they moved on to win three games in the pool stage. Another historic achievement! To borrow Toshiba's catchphrase, they were "*leading innovation*" in the world of rugby.

The reason why I am talking about rugby now is not to donate the historic items from the tournament to the gallery. They may come in the future, but it is because the V&A and the Rugby World Cup have something in common and that is Toshiba! As many of you may have noticed on the pitchside hoardings, Toshiba was one of the RWC's major sponsors.

Moreover, Toshiba's company team has long been a substantial force in Japanese rugby, as evidenced by a couple of their own players, including the redoubtable team captain, who actually fought on the pitch in this tournament whilst the Japan Rugby Football Union's current Chairman is a former Chairman of Toshiba. Thus the V&A and Rugby Japan happily share the strong support from Toshiba as the former is made of history while the latter has made history.

Long-term commitment is an inseparable trait of the business model of Japanese companies,

including Toshiba. But it should be welcomed that this characteristic is also applied to their CSR activities. The wonderful collection of this gallery has been admirably maintained and upgraded despite the ups and downs of the company itself over three decades.

The gallery's success over the last 30 years surely owes a great deal to the curators and other people of the museum, but without the steadfast support from Toshiba it would not have been possible. And with their continued commitment to further generosity, the gallery has once again been reinvigorated. It is a great pleasure to see the new 400 exhibits of huge interest on permanent display. Like its sponsor, the gallery is also *leading innovation*.

Such innovation will continue to be showcased in the exhibition of fashion, industry and art work of Japan here at this gallery from the past to today and beyond. That is the reason why I and many others keep coming back to this wonderful facility. I hope we all shall have many more chances to return. Congratulations and thank you.