

as delivered

**Speech at the Japan Society Annual General Meeting
at the Embassy of Japan
by Ambassador Koji Tsuruoka
on Wednesday 22 June 2016**

Thank you Sir David for the introduction, I would first of all like to thank all of you – the Japan Society – for coming to our Embassy for the Annual General Meeting. I am particularly glad that you have done so, so soon after my arrival in London. I arrived on the 6th June, so have been here a little more than ten days now.

I have been appointed the new President of the Japan Society – and of course you all know I know really nothing about the Japan Society in the UK because I've just arrived. But Sir David and Heidi, very diligently doing their own job, visited me in my office just a few days ago to enlighten me about the Japan Society. Very appropriate. The first thing I was quite impressed by is that this society has 125 years of history. Not much in the world continues for that long and this really reflects the long-standing and strong friendship that the two countries and the two peoples have had over the course of these years. Of course these years were not always filled with happy memories. There were times when ... [mic problem] – maybe this microphone didn't want to catch what I was saying! But of course we are gathered here with lots of good will and I am very happy to be participating in this meeting. Let me just say a few more words. Of course I don't need to remind you that we have links between Japan and the UK, and the early days of Japan's modernisation, which is one part of this 125 years of history, the UK has supported Japan's modernisation, in engineering, railways technology and ship-building, and also culture. In return, some people who visited Japan discovered Japanese culture and those have been sometimes brought back, they were made familiar to the UK through the visitors in Japan.

And of course I don't need to mention Japonism that became popular in Europe since then.

The society, I have heard from the two visitors to my office recently, was founded in 1891, so that makes it the 125th anniversary. I would like just to mention, as I was mentioning Heidi's visit to my office, that she was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays by the Government of Japan this spring. And this of course in recognition of her distinguished contribution to Japan-UK relations in the fields of culture, education and Japanese language teaching in the UK. Moreover, she was also deservedly included in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2016, receiving an OBE for her services to UK-Japan relations to date. And I think that the Japan Society together with Heidi can be proud of this award because this is recognition, through an individual, of the contribution the Japan Society has made, so of course, we are always in a mix of this group, individual, nation, people. At the end of the day, it is my belief that individuals do the work.

And that leads me to mention Sir Hugh Cortazzi's wonderful publications. It is going to reach the 10th volume, once again introducing more than 600 individuals via their work for improving and maintaining the friendship between Japan and UK.

This is a very good opportunity for me to welcome you to the embassy and I am looking forward to meeting you in person, as well as working with you for even further enhancing the friendly relations between Japan and the UK. Since we are just a few days before a major event, not that I need to mention it, but it may be a bit strange if I don't, because I am officially representing my country in London, and I just want to say, because I also represent the Japanese business community in London, and perhaps this is something that is no news to you, the Japanese business community wants the United Kingdom to continue to be part of Europe because that is how they have been doing business, and all the

businesses that they have been conducting have been all very successful. So for people to do business, it is important that there is stability and predictability.

So without further ado, let me hand over to the Chair. Thank you.