

As delivered

**Speech at a Farewell Reception for the Participants of
the 2016 JET Programme
by Ambassador Koji Tsuruoka
at the Embassy of Japan
on Friday 15 July 2016**

Good evening everyone.

Thank you very much for joining us for this celebration and party to send off the most ambitious and greatest young people from the UK to Japan! I was talking to your seniors, those who have experienced, many years ago, this same programme. In fact, the average age of people filling this room is probably the youngest since I have arrived, although I've been here only 7 to 8 weeks. We've had many, let's say adult, or... I have to be very careful when choosing my words... I mean that you are very young, and we envy that. We also envy that you will be going to the unknown. It's so adventurous, so mysterious. You have been told a number of things but you will only find out when you get there, you will be the judge.

The same applies for us, for example, at the Embassy. All information is available through the internet nowadays. But you can't have face-to-face meetings, you can't taste the food or drink the best *sake* unless you are there. It makes a whole difference being there, not just hearing about it. Unfortunately, being there is not going to last forever – there's a limitation in time. But, one day can also be one week – depending on how you spend the time in 24 hours, and depending on how you remember those 24 hours. You will have a whole year, and an extension maybe, which will allow you to be there for 2 or 3 years, or eventually even 5 years, which may coincide with two major events that are scheduled to happen in Japan. One is the 2019 Rugby World Cup. We produced a miracle as you may remember. It is a miracle because it has not been repeated,

yet. We hope we could do the same and then go even further in 2019 because Japan will be hosting the Rugby World Cup. 2020 is the second Tokyo Olympics – these are events of, of course, global significance and you may be lucky to be in Japan at that time. When you are watching, let's say, whatever sports, it could be the World Cup, it could be the European Soccer Championships, through the television in your living room, yes, it is very cosy. You may even have a drink in your hand. But it's a totally different experience in the stadium as those who have been there know very well. It will be the same when the Japanese people will be excited to host these two global major events and welcome foreigners who will hopefully be coming to Japan in great number – not necessarily speaking Japanese or knowing Japan – but interested to watch the game and also familiarise themselves with Japan in a short time. What you'll be teaching the Japanese students, after you arrive there, may contribute to provide the Japanese students with more capability in being a good host. And you yourself, if you stay on, could even play that role too. That is the kind of partnership and collaboration that this programme allows you to do. But, of course, it is up to you how you use it, what you do, what you produce and what you think. The production of a result is done not by you alone, it has to be done together with the local community of where you'll be going, the school to which you'll be assigned and the students at the end who you'll have direct contact with – and there are after hours as well – it's not just classrooms. It's outside classrooms that you'll be able to make a huge difference. And you're all welcome to be yourself because you're young, and students are even younger than you are – youth is capable of tolerating differences because they don't really know what difference is to start with and that's the beauty of having international exchange firmly in your hand. Now, I shouldn't be withholding this happy gathering any further. I will need to close my remarks by saying first of all, a long journey is waiting for you. Soon you'll be fastening your seatbelts and half a day later you'll be on the other side of the world. You'll have the opportunity of experiencing for the first time in your life many, many things.

You will be able to absorb all of that and the change will happen overnight or even within a short time, so be prepared for that and I hope and wish you all the success during your term in the JET Programme.

Thank you all very much for joining us.

(End)