

Ambassador's Remarks

Emperor's Birthday Reception 2020

What a beautiful rendition! Please give another big applause to Camila-san and Jordan! Thanks.

Your Royal Highness, Your Excellencies, My Lords, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. Introduction

Thank you for coming to the Embassy of Japan to attend its national day reception this evening, celebrating the Birthday of His Majesty The Emperor of Japan. His Majesty just turned age 60 on 23rd February this past Sunday. Today's reception is a special occasion as this is His Majesty's first birthday celebration as the new Emperor, since he was enthroned on 1 May last year. Together with you, I would like to wish His Majesty's continued good health and wellbeing.

On your way in to the Ballroom today, you may have seen some photos on display of the Emperor and Empress's and photos showing their strong ties with the United Kingdom. Their Majesties

have both studied at the University of Oxford and have developed deep connections with the UK. Following the invitation from Her Majesty the Queen, The Emperor and Empress will make a State Visit to the UK this spring, which will be the first time that Their Majesties are traveling abroad following the enthronement last year. I am sure that this State Visit will add a new chapter in our already most cordial relations.

This is my first appearance before such a large gathering at the Embassy since I came here to the UK in late November of last year. This may be the first occasion for me to meet with some of you. Yet certainly I look forward to seeing you over and over again during my office here in London. I make my mission very clear. To assist our relations to further develop bilaterally and in the global context.

2. Japan-UK relations

The close relations between our two nations have continued to grow and prosper throughout 2019 and into 2020. Japan and the UK mutually recognize that we are important global partners that share basic values such as freedom,

democracy, human rights, free trade and navigation and the rule of law. The government of Japan vows to strengthen not only economic ties, but cooperation with the UK in all aspects including political, security and cultural fields.

First, it was particularly significant that Foreign Secretary Raab chose Japan as one of the first countries to visit after BREXIT and held the Eighth Strategic Dialogue with our Foreign Minister Motegi, earlier this month. In the field of security and defence, HMS Montrose and Enterprise entered port in Japan in March and October 2019. The first ever Japan-UK joint army training exercise, “Vigilant Isles 19”, took place between September and October 2019 here in the UK. These all contributed to Japan-UK security cooperation, which has expanded in the last several years.

Second, as the UK leaves the European Union, Japan and the UK will be in a position to create a new economic relationship. The negotiation will be extremely important not only in the context of shaping the future of the Japan-UK economic ties, but also for the future of the Japanese businesses now operating in the UK. We will continue to ask

the UK Government for transparency, predictability and legal stability so that the Japanese companies can continue to operate here in the UK unhindered. At the end of last year, our two Prime Ministers discussed our telephone meeting that our two countries will promptly build a new bilateral economic partnership soon after BREXIT. This was reiterated in the joint press statement of the Foreign Ministers meeting in Tokyo this month. We restated our commitment for a Japan-UK Economic Partnership Agreement made at the highest political level, and together it is now the time to make this happen. Taking the Japan-EU EPA as a common ground, we would like to build a framework that is ambitious, of a high standard and mutually beneficial, that will help the economies of Japan and the UK develop further.

Third, on the cultural side, we have been running the “Japan-UK Season of Culture” since 2019 and into this year, bridging last year’s Rugby World Cup and this year’s Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. The Rugby World Cup was a big success, despite a Typhoon hit Japan during the tournament. The event was praised by World Rugby Chairman Sir Bill

Beaumont who said, it would be remembered as “probably the greatest Rugby World Cup” in the tournament’s 32 year history. Visitors who came to Japan from the UK enjoyed not just Rugby matches but Japan’s delicious cuisine, *Onsen* hot springs and other traditional activities, and many visited the countryside across Japan. As a result, between last September and November, the number of tourists from the UK had risen by 60,000 people, a record high in history. The tournament gave the people of Japan and the UK many moving emotional scenes, which have been engraved in our hearts. I believe that it has given an incredibly positive effect to the deepening of our two counties’ relationship.

This summer, Tokyo will be hosting the highly anticipated Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. Today in this room we have a display of the torches which will be relayed in Japan. It resembles Japan’s “Cherry Blossom” and using pioneering technology, are made of a seamless, single piece of material. Being mindful of reconstruction efforts in the Tohoku region of Japan after the Great East Japan Earthquake, 30 percent of the material of this torch is made out of scrapped construction aluminum

from the reconstruction temporary housings in the affected areas. We hope that the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics will become the “most innovative Games in history that would bring positive change to the world”. Our Embassy will further our efforts so that through sports friendship between our two peoples will deepen further. Over 700 events have been registered as part of the “Japan Season of Culture in the UK”. From exchange in the cultural and artistic arena to the innovation and pioneering technology in the area of medicine, science technology and industry, we aim to show the multifaceted attraction of Japan and promote more of the handmade activities in the local communities and at a grass roots level, to create a long-term legacy for Japan and the UK.

Today, we have two promotional stalls highlighting the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics as well as the Japan Season of Culture, so please have a look. We are grateful for your help in boosting momentum for the Japan-UK Season of Culture.

3. Japan Promotion

This evening we have tried to provide you with a glimpse of Japan through mini experiences. First,

for food, our Residence chefs have prepared Sashimi with Maruhanichiro's highly sustainable tuna, which is fully farmed (from egg taken from fully farmed tuna) and Roast Beef with Zennoh's Japanese Wagyu Beef. There are also Japanese "Crown Melon" which are one of the finest quality melon in the world and Japanese sweets from Minamoto Kichoan. Second, for drinks there is Asahi Super Dry draft beer, Zennoh's rice beer which is made from Japanese high quality rice, Japanese Sake from Sake Samurai, Spirits from Suntory, Kosu Wine from KoJ, Hokkaido Wine from NIKI Hills Winery and Japanese Maiko Tea. Third, we have highlighted Japanese technology through displaying NEC's world-leading face recognition technology used in public safety, immigration and airport check-in. Japanese cosmetics company SUQQU has also made a beauty counter so please try their products. Last but not least, Tokushima and Aichi prefectures have promotional stalls and our Tourism Office, JNTO also has an information desk so please ask them for advice on your upcoming trips to Japan. I am sure you will enjoy exploring all these stands and trying the produce and products on offer. I

would like to thank all the sponsors and volunteers who have helped make this reception even more enjoyable.

4. Closing

I cannot close my remarks without briefly mentioning the Coronavirus. The number of general cases in Japan is not protrusive compared with other countries, and in the UK, the risk remains low to individuals according to the UK Government. However, this evening we have taken necessary precautions, such as making hand sanitisers readily available and serving our foods in a mindful manner, so that you can all feel comfortable and enjoy the evening without any worries.

My staff are throughout the Embassy, so please don't hesitate to speak with them if you need any assistance. Thank you again for coming and I look forward to meeting with you throughout the event.