

**REMARKS FOR “UK-JAPAN FTA – WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR GREATER
MANCHESTER?”**

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[Introduction]

Mayor Burnham, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Though it is unfortunate that the COVID-19 situation has prevented us from gathering face to face, it is my great pleasure and honour to join this virtual event today. I would like to start by expressing my deep appreciation to all the people involved for the efforts in organising this wonderful occasion.

[Japan-UK EPA]

For Japan and the UK, I believe 2021 is a special year. With the Brexit transition period over and the Japan-UK Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement having come into effect, we are witnessing the onset of a new era. Now that the UK has become an independent and important player outside the EU, the Japanese government and Japanese companies are taking a great deal of interest in the new roles which the UK will play in the international society.

The Japan-UK EPA provides a legal framework for the future, bringing predictability and certainty for businesses and successfully securing continuity under Brexit. The total of goods and service trade between the two countries accounted for more than 30 billion pounds in 2019, and Japanese businesses have been actively investing in the UK across various sectors for many years and even for decades. In fact, for Japan, the UK is the second-largest investment destination only after the US, and Japanese foreign direct investment to the UK spans industries from the automotive sector to pharmaceuticals, and from real estate to communications. From the viewpoint of these businesses, ensuring continuity for such an important bilateral relationship is a significant achievement.

And beyond continuity, this agreement includes some of the world’s most advanced content, particularly regarding the digital sector, that will prove to be highly significant as we grapple with the pandemic and its aftermath. I understand that, after Brexit, the British government is working to make

the UK “a science superpower”, and in order to achieve this goal digital technologies need to be fully utilised. I am confident that the EPA will be an important tool to further such opportunities.

Looking ahead, Japan as a current chair of CPTPP, Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, cordially welcomes a decision of the CPTPP members on 2nd June to commence the accession process with the UK. It has significant meaning from the perspective of strengthening Japan-UK economic relations as well as for the world economy as the UK's admission into CPTPP would bring the mega free trade zone almost on par with that of the EU.

For the UK, accession will be a great opportunity to strengthen its ties with the fast-growing Asian market. Moreover, it should lead to the UK's further commitment to Indo-Pacific region under the ‘Global Britain’ agenda. There is great scope for bilateral cooperation in this region, and I hope Japan-UK cooperation in this domain will grow wider and deeper in the coming years.

[Regional Development]

Now turning the focus to Greater Manchester, I understand that innovation has driven the development of this region.

As we all know, Greater Manchester was the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. That momentous development brought about many technological advances, especially in the textile industry, and led to an economic boom. Part of the legacy of that time is the spirit of innovation, still very much in evidence today in Greater Manchester. Moreover, it seems to me that the region is now striving to spawn a new kind of industrial revolution, putting the emphasis on “Digital” and “Green”.

Greater Manchester has built a reputation as one of the world's best cities for digital technology and cybersecurity. It is a leading digital city region, with the infrastructure, skills, and networks needed for digitalisation. This is clearly shown by the fact that, in 2019, the British government selected Greater Manchester as the home for its new GCHQ, Government Communications Headquarters.

Moreover, Greater Manchester has set out a long-term environmental vision to be carbon neutral by 2038, and in order to achieve this goal it is driving the creation of new technologies and improved resource efficiency. Furthermore, it is now working to engineer a “green recovery” from COVID-19, focused on developing a greener, more resilient and equitable society. In this April, Prime Minister Suga of Japan announced new ambitious goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 46

percent from the 2013 level by year 2030. As we can recall, G7 Summit was recently held under the UK Presidency in Cornwall and the world leaders affirmed that we should build back greener from the pandemic. With the UK hosting COP26 this autumn, tackling climate change and promoting decarbonization is clearly an area in which we all have great interest.

I also would like to emphasize the importance of the HS2 project, extending from London to Manchester and further, which will strengthen the connection between the regions. This project will provide boost to Manchester's development by revitalising people's movement within a country. Japanese companies possess a wealth of experience in high-speed rail, garnered through 50 years working on the Japanese Shinkansen, or bullet trains, and they are keen to put that knowhow to good use in HS2's rolling stock, as well as signalling and control systems. We would be delighted to see Japanese companies contributing to such a landmark infrastructure project in the UK to enhance connectivity.

[City-Region Diplomacy]

I understand that another area in which Greater Manchester is actively engaged is city-region diplomacy.

In this connection, I would like to welcome especially Greater Manchester's interest in formalising a city-region partnership with Osaka. Known as the "Manchester of the East", Osaka has not surprisingly been identified as a key target. World Expo 2025, to be held in Osaka in which the UK Government has just decided its participation, will be an ideal opportunity for these two regions to deepen their relationship.

Global city regions like Greater Manchester, and perhaps Osaka as well, have a number of roles to play in addressing the challenges we face. Apart from helping drive the recovery from COVID-19, they have much to offer in areas like smart cities and sustainable cities. City-region diplomacy will present an opportunity for global city regions to work together to address those issues they have in common and it is another area with huge potential for future collaboration.

Furthermore, in collaboration between the regions, people-to-people and cultural exchanges are essential. Once the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, I trust such interaction will continue to develop and flourish in many ways.

[Cultural Exchanges]

In this connection, I am very glad to inform you that the Japan-UK Season of Culture has been extended. In light of the suspensions made necessary by the pandemic and also taking into account the postponement of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, we are pleased to share with you that the Season's activities will continue to the end of 2021. Indeed, we hope that a variety of Japan-related events will take place in Greater Manchester when restrictions are eased.

[Concluding Words]

In conclusion, there are many ways to foster a deeper relationship between Japan and Greater Manchester. And today's event is a meaningful occasion for a wide-ranging examination on this topic. Like all of you, I am eager to hear what everyone has to say in this regard, and I look forward to working together with you.

I would like to close my remarks by once again expressing my appreciation to the Mayor, the Honorary Consul and all of you. I am truly looking forward to visiting Manchester in person as soon as situations allow.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.