

Remarks by H.E. Mr. HAYASHI Hajime,  
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,  
for Bestowal of the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun  
upon Sir Michael Rake (2nd December, 2021)

Ladies and Gentlemen, Good evening, and welcome to my residence.

I feel specially privileged this evening since I have truly distinguished guests at my residence. This is because we are gathered here to pay tribute to Sir Mike Rake for his significant contribution to the promotion of the relations between Japan and the UK. During his outstanding career, Sir Mike worked for many years at KPMG, then as chairman of BT from 2007 to 2017, and of the CBI, the UK's most important and strongest industry body, from 2013 to 2015. Throughout such time, Sir Mike had worked closely and untiringly with Japanese business and government to deepen and widen the ties between our two countries.

While I am sure everyone here is very familiar with Sir Mike's numerous achievements, I would like to mention just a few examples of his contributions towards Japan-UK relations.

Firstly, before Brexit, Sir Mike was highly committed to strengthening the relationship between Japan and the EU, and a strong supporter of the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement, EPA, which eventually came into effect after lengthy negotiations in 2019. During his visit to Japan in 2013, as Chairman of CBI, he provided a speech to the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan, and he eloquently emphasized the benefits of the agreement, and called for an early conclusion of the EPA. He then added further support in a CBI report by demanding that this agreement should be promptly concluded, and by proactively lobbying the European Commission.

Meanwhile, in the field of ICT during his time as Chairman of BT Group, Sir Mike was an invaluable partner to Japanese business and government, utilizing his expertise in many international events hosted by Japan and helping to further strengthen Japan-UK cooperation in digital economy. To give just a couple of examples, he attended the World ICT Summit in Tokyo as keynote speaker in 2009, and he also made a presentation at the Japan Business Federation's ICT Committee meeting in 2010.

Thanks to his continuous efforts to promote the roles of Japan in the UK, Japan now enjoys an even greater cooperative relationship with the UK than ever before. I sincerely hope that Japan can continue to count on his support

and wisdom particularly when our partnership has entered a new era after Brexit.

In view of Sir Mike's really sterling works outlined just now, the Government of Japan considers that he well deserves to be highly honoured for his genuinely outstanding contribution to the promotion of Japan-UK relations with the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun. I would like to add that recipients of this, which is the highest level of decoration in Japan, would normally be invited to Tokyo to receive their award directly from His Majesty the Emperor at the Imperial Palace. Very unfortunately, however, the pandemic caused by COVID-19 prevented us from doing so. But, today, here at my residence in London, I have great pleasure to celebrate Sir Mike together with his family and friends who are all involved in his enormous achievements.

Congratulations, Sir Mike!