

**Remarks by Ambassador HAYASHI Hajime
on the occasion of the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan**

23 February 2022

Your Excellencies, My Lords,

Distinguished guests,

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for your participation today in this reception, which marks His Majesty the Emperor's birthday. Last year, this event had to be conducted online due to the severity of the pandemic. While we have significantly reduced the scale of this occasion to around one quarter compared to normal years, taking into due account the current COVID-19 situation, both my wife and I are extremely pleased to be able to meet you all in person to celebrate His Majesty's birthday.

Today marks His Majesty the Emperor's 62nd birthday, and over at the Imperial Palace in Japan a celebratory ceremony has been conducted, also with a limited number of attendees. Since ascending the throne on 1st May 2019, His Majesty has made very clear the importance he attaches to the peace and prosperity of the whole world. As we echo his sentiments, please join me in wishing His Majesty continued good health and wellbeing. I am also deeply thankful to the Right Honourable Amanda Milling, Minister for Asia and the Middle East, who will provide us with a congratulatory speech shortly.

Distinguished guests,

Japan and the United Kingdom have forged a long history of exchanges and friendly relations, particularly since the latter half of the 19th century. This includes exchanges between the British Royal Family and the Japanese Imperial Family. Furthermore, Japan and the United Kingdom are both island states who share the same fundamental values such as democracy, the rule of law, and human rights and are working together against attempts to change the

status quo by force. We have consistently cooperated as each other's closest economic and security partners in Asia and Europe respectively. Our partnership is strategic, but at the same time, I believe, very natural.

This year marks the 120th anniversary of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Alliance. The treaty was signed here in London on January 30th 1902 by the Foreign Secretary, the 5th Marquess of Lansdowne, and the Japanese resident Minister, HAYASHI Tadasu. He became the first Ambassador to the UK soon after the signing, and by chance has the same family name as mine. I myself arrived shortly before the Emperor's birthday last year, and have now been in the UK for around one year. When I reflect on the past year, it has been one in which great strides have been made in the relationship between Japan and the United Kingdom, despite the difficulties and restrictions caused by COVID-19.

First and foremost, it was last year that the UK hosted both the G7 and COP26 meetings, giving added impetus to multilateral diplomacy and the ties among the relevant partners of the world. During the year, there were two visits to the UK by the Japanese Prime Ministers, while the Japanese Foreign Ministers also visited the UK on two separate occasions. For both Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio and Foreign Minister HAYASHI Yoshimasa, their visits to the UK comprised their first trips abroad since taking office.

In March last year, the UK announced its "Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy" with an evident "Indo-Pacific tilt", and this also paved the way for further promoting cooperation between Japan and the UK. Our two countries have joined forces towards the realisation of a "free and open Indo-Pacific" and Japan welcomes the intention expressed by the UK to further accelerate such efforts as its strategy for the next decade.

In particular, the port call in Japan in September last year of the Carrier Strike Group, led by the British aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, as well as the announcement in December

of Japan-UK collaboration on a future fighter aircraft, symbolises the significant progress that has been made in deepening security and defence cooperation between Japan and the UK in recent years. I was deeply moved by the beautiful rendition of the national anthems of both countries which the Royal Air Force Salon Orchestra has just provided. I would like to take this opportunity to express my utmost gratitude to all the relevant members of the Royal Air Force here with us today.

The UK-Japan EPA, which represents a new economic framework between Japan and the UK after its departure from the EU, also came into effect in January last year. We welcome the smooth implementation of the agreement over the past year. In light of this, Japanese and British companies now have the predictability and necessary legal stability to continue their business smoothly in the UK, even after BREXIT. Tomorrow, on 24th February, the first UK-Japan EPA Joint Committee meeting will be held in Tokyo, jointly chaired by International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan and Foreign Minister HAYASHI.

In addition, Japan welcomes the UK's progress in its process of joining the CPTPP. If the participation of the UK is realised, it will not only be of great significance for the world economy but will also be highly pertinent from the perspective of strengthening Anglo-Japanese economic relations. Japan held the presidency of both the TPP and the UK Accession Working Group last year, so I am extremely glad that Japan has been able to support the UK through this process.

Furthermore, at COP26 in November last year, Prime Minister KISHIDA and Prime Minister Boris Johnson met face to face in Glasgow. As both Japan and the UK have made addressing climate change a special priority, we were able to confirm that we would certainly make progress in our various areas of cooperation for decarbonisation such as green energy, green technology and green finance.

The 2019 Rugby World Cup and the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games brought the UK's fascination with Japan to its highest-ever level thanks to the great achievements of both the Japanese and British players and athletes. Clearly, despite the difficult situation in which the world now finds itself, the power of sports to bring people together really came to the fore. Indeed, the Paralympic Games, which originated in Stoke Mandeville here in the UK, helped bring us even closer to attaining a society in which everyone co-exists in harmony.

The "Japan-UK Season of Culture" came to fruition from an agreement made back in 2017 by the respective Prime Ministers at the time, Mr ABE Shinzo and The Right Honorable Theresa May. It began in 2019 and came to a close at the end of last year, having achieved great success despite the backdrop of the pandemic. During the Season, as many as 1,300 events took place, with an array of online events mixed in. There were special exhibits focused on Japanese culture, including those displayed at the British Museum, the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the University of Oxford's Ashmolean Museum. In addition, cherry tree planting projects were put into motion in various regions, with a total of 7,000 cherry trees planted or due to be planted. I would like to take this opportunity to once again express my sincere appreciation to all those who contributed to the Japan-UK Season of Culture.

Distinguished guests,

With great achievements such as these as the foundation, in 2022, which marks the 120th anniversary of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, all of my staff and I are committed to working hard to further expand and deepen the relationship between our two countries in all the areas that I have mentioned. And in this endeavour, I am truly thankful for the continued support and cooperation of our friends and colleagues in the United Kingdom.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.