

Remarks by Ambassador HAYASHI Hajime
for the Sakura Cherry Trees Ceremony
at UCL Japanese Garden on 5th April, 2022

President and Provost Michael Spence, Distinguished Guests,

It gives me great pleasure to attend today's ceremony in this wonderful setting. It seems very fitting that cherry trees, a symbol of Anglo-Japanese friendship, have been planted here at UCL, a place with a long and outstanding history of exchange with Japan.

The proposal from the Japanese private sector to donate as many as 7,000 cherry trees to the UK has indeed developed into a significant project. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tireless efforts of the Founder and Joint Chair Mr Sano and Lady Victoria Borwick, who have worked very hard to arrange the planting all over the UK, as well as all the other members of the Sakura Cherry Tree Project, who have turned a dream to reality.

The history of exchange with Japan at UCL can be traced back to 1863, when five young men risked their lives in a voyage to reach the UK and study at UCL. These students were named the "Choshu Five" after their home region, and on their return to Japan all of them used what they had learned here to contribute to the modernisation and internationalisation of Japan, after Japan had ended its closed-door policy just before that time. Following the Choshu Five, 19 young people from the region of Satsuma also came to study at UCL. And it makes me really excited to see the names of the Choshu Five and the Satsuma students inscribed on the monument here at UCL as a mark of its 160 years of exchange with Japan.

I am also aware that the Fragments of Memory monument was created to blend images of the turbulent times in which the Choshu Five lived with those of modern Japan, and the difficulties caused by disasters in Japan. As a matter of fact, Japan has often been hit by natural disasters, including the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami on 11th of March, 2011. Against such a backdrop, recovery from disasters is certainly one of Japan's major

challenges, and we hope that the knowledge and expertise created at UCL will provide clues for overcoming these challenges.

It also strikes me as most appropriate that these monuments should be installed along with the cherry trees planted here in the Japanese Garden, at the heart of the UCL campus. I hope that they will provide an opportunity for reflection for professors, faculty members and students of the UCL and that they will evoke the deep friendship that Japan and the UK have shared for such a long time.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.