

Remarks by HE HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK
for the Reception on board HMS Belfast
celebrating the Japan Self-Defence Force Day
and JS Kashima and Shimakaze's visit to the UK
Thursday 23 June 2022

Distinguished Guests,

I am delighted to welcome you all here on board HMS Belfast. This evening we have two specific purposes. First, this is a celebration of the Japan Self-Defence Force Day. Secondly, this is to commemorate Maritime Self-Defence Force Training Ship Kashima and Shimakaze's visit to the United Kingdom, Kashima to London and Shimakaze to Portsmouth respectively.

I would like to underline that these port calls symbolise the recent progress in security and defence cooperation between Japan and the UK. Last year, the UK Carrier Strike Group, CSG 21, deployed overseas and called at Yokosuka and other ports in Japan as a project embodying the "Indo-Pacific tilt" announced by the British Government. And I would like to convey to you that these port calls by two MSDF vessels could be a small reciprocation for CSG21. Despite serious restrictions caused by Covid-19, CSG21 had engaged with many countries and had made 10 bilateral and multilateral joint exercises with the Self-Defence Force of Japan. Taking today's opportunity, I would like to congratulate my British colleagues by saying that it was a great success and many people in the region were impressed by its operations. I genuinely hope that the reciprocal visits of naval vessels that have just been achieved this time will provide further opportunities for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region between our two countries.

Distinguished Guests,

I am pleased to note that the overall Japan-UK relationship is closer than ever before and it must be true that our bilateral ties and

partnership have become stronger throughout the progress of security and defence cooperation. In early May, when Prime Minister Kishida met with Prime Minister Johnson at 10 Downing Street, the two leaders confirmed such ongoing joint initiatives as Future Combat Air System, FCAS, and the Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement, RAA. As a matter of fact, the latter just marked the agreement in principle during their meeting. These projects will surely become the cornerstone of the future security and defence cooperation of the two countries and I am convinced that Japan and the UK are now entering a “new level” of cooperation in this field.

It is also significant to note that our partnership contributes not only to the security of our respective countries but to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and even in the international community as a whole.

The year 2022 began with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and we are reminded of how rapidly threats in a region become a reality of military conflicts and inhumane consequences. When we face squarely and try to deal with such a reality, cooperation and collaboration among allies and partners in the international community is more and more indispensable. Besides, it becomes also clearer that the security of the Euro-Atlantic region and the Indo-Pacific region are inseparable. Thus, Japan will remain committed to this crisis on European soil and will continue to work closely with the UK, and hopefully with other partners in Europe, for the security in the Indo-Pacific region.

Finally, I would like to touch upon a piece of history. This year, 2022, coincides with the 120th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Obviously, the world as well as our respective countries have changed dramatically during since then. However, it must be true that the close ties and partnership between Japan and the UK existed even 120 years ago. It is often pointed out that those ties were particularly strong and matured in the naval cooperation between our two countries. Based on this backdrop, I feel especially pleased that the port calls of two ships of Maritime Self-Defence Force to the UK are realised in this memorable year. And I

would like to express my hope from my heart that those ties and partnership will further develop and endure many years to come.

Distinguished Guests,

Before closing, I would like to add just a few words of information to you. During this reception on board Belfast you are welcome to access JS Kashima. If you would like to do so, your cooperation with Covid-19 measures are requested such as hand sanitisation at the boarding entrance. At the same time, some music performances are scheduled this evening by the Training Squadron's music band and the food to be served this evening is cooked by Kashima's cooking staff. I very much hope you will enjoy this special circumstance with HMS Belfast and JS Kashima anchored side by side.

Now I will ask Rear Admiral KOMUTA Hidesato, who is Commander of Japan Training Squadron of Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force to provide his brief greetings.

Thank you for your attention and Rear Admiral KOMUTA, please.