

Remarks by H.E. HAYASHI Hajime,  
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,  
for the 25<sup>th</sup> Summer Reunion for Peace and Friendship  
1<sup>st</sup> July 2022

Good evening, all the guests.

Thank you very much for taking time and being here this evening for this year's Summer Reunion for Peace and Friendship. It's wonderful to have you all back in the Embassy of Japan. My name is Hayashi Hajime and, since February last year, I have had the privilege and pleasure of serving as Ambassador of Japan to the United Kingdom.

Since it began in 1997, this Reunion has been one of the most important parts of the Embassy's calendar. It originally emerged from a programme which provided former prisoners of war and civilian internees the opportunity to visit Japan, in the hope of creating mutual understanding and beginning a process of reconciliation. The annual Reunion has allowed us to continue and deepen that process. I know that many strong friendships have been forged along the way.

Since becoming Ambassador, I have been looking forward to meeting you and to listening to your stories. Last year I was profoundly disappointed when circumstances obliged me to cancel the Reunion. This year, it is with an equally profound sense of gratitude and satisfaction that I am able to say: welcome back!

It is also important to keep in our thoughts those who have been affected by the pandemic, as well as those who cannot join us this evening. One person who sadly cannot be with us this evening is Mrs. Iona Williams, whom I'm sure some of you may know. In her letter regretting her absence, Mrs. Williams wrote a sentence which I think is particularly resonant: 'Let us encourage one another, to keep on with our loving, that more and more

people will see the need of peace and friendship in our world.’ A beautiful sentiment, and one which I am sure is shared in this room.

I know that some of our friends who attended previous receptions and made significant contributions to reconciliation have sadly passed away. I would like to pay tribute to those friends and to take this opportunity to extend my condolences to their families and loved ones. We should recognise those who have made huge efforts towards reconciliation, both in the UK and in Japan. And we should look to the future with a conviction that we can work together hand in hand.

And, on that point, it pleases me to say that the friendship between our two countries is going from strength to strength. Since I wrote to you in October last year, Prime Minister Kishida has visited the UK twice: once in November as part of the Glasgow climate summit, to demonstrate Japan’s commitment to working with the UK on climate change and to decarbonisation; and again in May this year, to discuss further deepening our security and economic ties. The proud history of Japan-UK security and defence cooperation has continued to develop to a ‘new level’, with two Japanese ships – the *JS Kashima* and the *JS Shimakaze* – completing port calls in London and Portsmouth last week. Those of you based in London may have even seen the *Kashima* docked on the Thames side by side with HMS Belfast. The Japan-UK relationship has flourished because of our shared values: democracy, the rule of law, and the upholding of human rights. While the international community faces a number of serious challenges, I know that Japan and the UK, as key partners, will work together to deal with them and to find possible solutions. Our strong partnership is built on the trust we share as individuals. I hope that this evening, as with every Reunion, that trust can grow a little stronger.

And so, with all that in mind, I would like to propose a toast. May we all be reunited next year at this most vital of events, and may we all enjoy good health and good spirits until then. Everyone, please join me in saying: *Kanpai!*