

## Stonehenge and prehistoric Japan - Ambassador Hayashi's remarks

Distinguished Guests,

I am very excited to announce the opening of this exhibition of “Stonehenge and prehistoric Japan” at Stonehenge, probably the UK’s most renowned prehistoric monument.

Shortly before this occasion, I had an opportunity to see Stonehenge at length. As a result, I must say how awe-struck I was to be reminded that such a huge site was created all of 5,000 years ago. When we contemplate ruins going back to the mists of time, it is irresistible to speculate as to the everyday lives, cultural practices and beliefs of our primeval ancestors. Stonehenge is probably the best example of an ancient edifice of this type.

In Japan, sites from the exactly same period as this are scattered all over the country. The Jomon monuments of Hokkaido and the northeast of Japan were inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List last year. It is very interesting to note that some of the ancient sites found in Japan bear a certain resemblance to Stonehenge. Equally remarkable is the fact that, as this exhibition shows, there was a unique Japanese culture at that time, different from that in Britain, which produced artefacts such as clay figurines and flame-shaped earthenware.

People in the UK are familiar to some degree with various aspects of Japanese culture, but not many Britons are aware of Japan’s Jomon period. This exhibition will bring Japan closer to the British public by shedding light on a previously little-known strand of ancient Japanese culture and the similarities between it and the UK.

Let me now jump 5,000 years forward from the ancient time to the present. I am pleased to announce a very welcome development for all of us gathered here who feel an affinity for Japan-UK relations. At long last, Japan's border control measures will be further eased, with visa exemptions to be reintroduced on 11 October. Japan is now ready to welcome foreign visitors back with open arms. Now, you can include Japan's Jomon sites in your itineraries when you make your next trip to Japan.

Well, a great deal of work has gone into organising this exhibition, and I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to English Heritage and the Sainsbury Institute in particular, including Dr Simon Kaner for their painstaking efforts in this regard.

Thank you very much indeed.