

Ambassador and Madame Hayashi, distinguished guests and members of the British Japanese Law Association, good evening.

On behalf of the British Japanese Law Association, my Co-Chair, Scott Hopkins, and I would like to express our sincere gratitude to Ambassador and Madame Hayashi for allowing us to co-host this evening's reception and to the Embassy's Political Section, headed by Minister Tsuji, and the Legal Attaché, Otake san, for their continued support.

The British Japanese Law Association (BJLA) was founded in London in 1998 in order to promote co-operation between the United Kingdom and Japan in the legal field. The BJLA has been facilitating exchange between the two countries through assisting those who are engaged in the administration of justice, practice and study of law in the UK and Japan and through organising events to promote co-operation and deeper understanding. Since its foundation, the BJLA has received and continues to enjoy strong support from the Japanese Embassy and its successive legal attachés.

Notwithstanding many uncertainties that prevail today, the relationship between the legal communities in the UK and Japan goes from strength to strength, enhanced by our mutual trust and respect for each other. It is, no doubt, clear to everyone gathered here, that there are strong ties between the two countries, thanks to their true commitment to the rule of law and justice.

Indeed, we have been very fortunate and privileged to experience firsthand the close co-operation between the two countries through the BJLA and at other international gatherings. Any transnational legal matters require international co-operation and while there are official channels and arrangements in place, what often provides vital clues for solutions is through personal friendships and contacts founded on mutual trust.

We are struck by the commitment that the Japanese Government makes to international co-operation. Quite a number of Japanese judges, prosecutors, lawyers and academics are currently conducting research or studying in the UK and many of them are here this evening. We are also grateful to the UK Government and the members of the judiciary, legal profession and academia, again very well represented this evening, for warmly receiving visitors and scholars from Japan.

Perhaps not as many go from the UK to Japan to study. Nevertheless, many of the current and former members of the BJLA have studied and worked or currently work in Japan, making a significant contribution to further strengthening the ties between the two countries.

Once again, on behalf of the BJLA, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Ambassador and Madame Hayashi and the Japanese Embassy for the strong support that they continue to give to the legal community. We would also like to thank you all for being with us this evening.

And please enjoy networking “face-to-face” in such a splendid setting! Thank you.