

Short Remarks by H.E. Mr. HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
for Japan-Wales KIZUNA Reception
14th December 2022

First Minister Drakeford, Distinguished Guests,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all here, to the Embassy of Japan. I particularly appreciate First Minister Drakeford and all other participants from Wales who have made a long journey to join us today, probably by using cars rather than by train even though they may prefer the latter. It is also the case for Ms. Isabel Harries, a prominent Welsh harpist, and Only Boys Aloud, one of my favourite chorus group in the U.K., who will play and sing later and I am looking forward to listening to them.

Since taking up my role as Ambassador to the UK in February 2021, I have had the opportunities to visit Wales three times. Each time I became more fascinated with its landscape, culture, tradition and most importantly its people. I very much hope this reception will convey the warmth of the Welsh people to the Japanese participants, who may not yet know so much about Wales.

I also hope today's reception reflects the vibrant, longstanding partnership between Japan and Wales. From the economic aspect, this year marks the 50th anniversary of Japanese investment in Wales. In 1972, a Japanese synthetic plastics producer called Takiron came to Wales and set up one of the first Japanese manufacturing operations in the UK. We will shortly learn about the experiences of Mr Takayasu Owada, Takiron's first Cardiff branch manager.

Following that momentous step, today more than 50 Japanese companies, including Sony, Panasonic, Toyota, and NEC, have major

business operations in Wales. The presence of these Japanese companies has not only led to greater economic opportunities and technological advancement in Wales but has also raised the prospect of fostering future businesses in such areas as IT, new forms of energy like hydrogen, and offshore wind facilities for decarbonisation.

Moreover, there have been lasting cultural ties. From the Edo period in Japan, between the 17th and 19th centuries, Japanese craftworks such as lacquerware were brought to Wales and triggered people's longing for trade with, and goods from, the Far East. More recently, the 2019 Rugby World Cup held in Japan led to fruitful exchange in sport, arts and culture, and dramatically inspired friendship between Wales and Japan, especially involving Oita Prefecture and the cities in the Kyushu region which hosted Team Wales.

Last but not least, I hope this reception will bring a fresh impetus for further deepening and widening our partnership. I genuinely believe that in the next 50 years we will see much greater collaboration between our two nations in many fields.

Thank you very much, indeed.