

**Remarks by H.E. Mr. HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
for the Reception to Celebrate
the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan
at Japan House London on 7 February 2023**

Excellencies, My Lords and My Ladies,

Distinguished guests,

I feel absolutely thrilled to see so many truly outstanding guests here this evening. My wife and I would like to express our genuine heartfelt gratitude for your participation in this reception, which is to celebrate His Majesty the Emperor's 63rd birthday.

Last year, we faced a very sad occasion, the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who reigned for 70 years, leading an open Royal Family while upholding British tradition. Contrary to usual practices in Japan, His Majesty the Emperor himself attended the state funeral together with Her Majesty the Empress and conveyed their deepest condolences to His Majesty King Charles III. This symbolises the deep-rooted bonds between the Imperial Family and the Royal Family and the ties between the people of Japan and the UK. Listening to Ms. Victoria Meteyard's beautiful performance of the two national anthems allowed me to dwell on these deeply entrenched bonds even further.

I hope you will all join me here today in wishing for the continued health and prosperity of His Majesty the Emperor, the shared prosperity of the Imperial Family of Japan and the Royal Family of the UK, and the further development of friendly relations between both countries and peoples.

Distinguished guests,

If we turn our attention towards Japan-UK relations, both countries have made steady progress in bilateral cooperation as global strategic partners.

This year started with a summit meeting held at the historic Tower of London. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak signed the Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) to further deepen our security and defence cooperation, in which we see the fruition of our long-standing efforts. Both leaders welcomed this agreement along with the joint development of a next-generation fighter aircraft in cooperation with Japan, the UK and Italy. They also welcomed the ever-deepening economic ties and confirmed that we will join forces

together to achieve an early conclusion of negotiations for the UK's accession to CPTPP.

Japan and the UK are also partners that share fundamental values of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. We stand together and firm in our response to the situation in Ukraine, with unprecedented strong sanction measures against Russia and continuing support for the people in Ukraine. We join our efforts towards the realisation of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific," opposing unilateral attempts to change status quo by force or coercion. We also work together in tackling global challenges such as climate change, the energy crisis, and economic security. In 2023, I firmly believe that both governments will further cooperate and lead the international community, through G7 under the Japanese Presidency as well as the UN Security Council, in which Japan serves as a non-permanent member.

Of course, our collaboration is not limited to intergovernmental relations. We have the great pleasure of welcoming many Members of Parliament today who have supported our partnership. Moreover, steady progress has been made in exchanges and cooperation between the Supreme Courts of Japan and the UK based on the close ties which have been created among lawyers and judicial experts of the two countries.

Needless to say, the essential foundation for these achievements is the promotion of mutual understanding among the people through grass-root exchanges. I am extremely pleased to see that social, economic, and cultural activities in the UK are returning to pre-pandemic levels. Under these circumstances, such cultural events as the Japan-related special exhibition at the Queen's Gallery and the production of "My Neighbor Totoro" by the Royal Shakespeare Company received great praises. Also, since last spring, more than 300 JET program participants have traveled to Japan and begun working as English teachers and international exchange advisers in many different locations in Japan. In addition, tourism between Japan and the UK has been steadily increasing due to the resumption of short-stay visa exemptions for British nationals. I strongly hope for further increases in study and academic exchanges as well as of tourists between our two countries.

Distinguished guests,

Meeting with so many of you today on this occasion is an extremely valuable opportunity.

Therefore, I am delighted to introduce you some booths of Japanese companies and organisations active in the UK, which display state-of-the-art technologies and successful

business examples in the UK to address our common challenges, together with some of attractive destinations and exchanges available for British visitors to Japan. For doing so, we focus on the three particular themes of Japan's policy priorities; (1) Green transition and decarbonisation, (2) digitalisation, and (3) tourism and exchange promotion. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mitsubishi Corporation, Marubeni, Hitachi Rail, Toyota, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Fujikura, NEC, JNTO, the Japan Foundation, and some Japanese local government for their respective contributions.

I hope you will all stop by these booths and enjoy Japanese food as well as sake and wine just arrived from Japan, and experience the charm of Japan in a multifaceted perspective.

I must also stress that today's reception would not have been possible without the cooperation of Japan House London. The venue we are standing in today, is a transmission hub for spreading the wonder and charm of Japanese culture and the regional attractions of Japan in a variety of innovative ways.

I am pretty sure that there will be many opportunities for both Japanese and British citizens to pay their attention on one another's countries. Taking this opportunity, I would like to ask for your continued support to further strengthen the Japan-UK relationship in the wide range of areas I have touched upon today.

Thank you very much indeed for your kind attention.

(END)