

**Remarks by H.E Hajime Hayashi,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at the Japan-UK RENKEI 10th Anniversary Reception
on Tuesday 28 March 2023**

Distinguished Guests,

It is my privilege to welcome all of you to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Japan- UK RENKEI project this evening. I am very pleased that we had an inspiring keynote speech today delivered by Mr George Freeman MP, Minister of State in the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.

As some of you are well aware, RENKEI was launched in 2012, following a visit to Tokyo by The Lord Hague of Richmond when he was Foreign Secretary. I am glad to know that since then, twelve leading research universities from the two countries have committed themselves to engaging in regular exchange and to developing academic networks.

I feel our two countries are particularly well placed to launch such a project. On the one hand, there is a long history of friendship between us, spanning more than 400 years. And, on the other hand, now we have forged a strong strategic partnership founded upon our shared fundamental values such as democracy and academic freedom. Since higher educational institutions are certainly the guardians of such values, RENKEI is very much a symbolic project for our close partnership.

As today's world forces us to face a host of common yet unpredictable challenges, higher educational institutions need to play an increasingly key role in society, both in Japan and in the UK. To solve daunting critical issues such as infectious diseases and climate change, the knowledge and intellectual resources of our two highly mature countries will be indispensable. I trust that, through the RENKEI framework, young researchers in Japan and in the UK will pursue academic exchange which will lead to breakthroughs not only in their respective disciplines but also in complex interdisciplinary areas to the enduring benefit of us all.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Mr Matt Knowles, Director for Japan of the British Council, which was instrumental in setting up RENKEI, as well as to all those who have been involved in the evolution of this extremely worthwhile and valuable project.

Thank you very much indeed.