

**Remarks by H.E Hajime Hayashi,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at the awarding the Ambassador's Commendation
to Dr Helen Macnaughtan
on Tuesday 16th May 2023**

Professor Habib, Distinguished Guests,

With this fantastic gathering of people associated with teaching and studying about Japan, I would like to highlight the tremendous contribution of Dr Helen Macnaughtan, to whom I will shortly have the pleasure of presenting the Ambassador's Commendation.

Dr Macnaughtan has spent many years researching gender and sporting issues in Japan and has contributed to developing British awareness of Japan's economy and society.

Starting from her time as a MEXT scholar from New Zealand, she has developed a strong and longstanding connection with Japan. Her research started from focusing on women in the Japanese textile industry, after which she extended her interest to gender and employment issues in modern Japanese society. She has also engaged in research on various aspects of Japanese sports, from sporting history to sports-related industries, by involving academic colleagues throughout the world, athletes both in the UK and in Japan, and sporting institutions.

Meanwhile, since becoming the first female Chair of the Japan Research Centre in 2015, Dr Macnaughtan has dedicated herself to strengthening Japanese Studies at SOAS and raising public awareness of Japan in the UK. The sports symposia series, of which we had the last session today, is a case in point. The lecture series has shed considerable light on Japanese sports diplomacy and the socio-economic impacts of hosting two mega sports events, namely the Rugby World Cup in 2019 and the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, in successive years, though the latter actually took place in 2021. These huge events had a major impact in the UK as well as around the world, doing much to raise people's interest in Japan.

May I also mention something that has been confidential until today. This is her service as an interview panellist since 2010 to find distinguished UK candidates for the Japanese Government scholarships offered every year at my Embassy. Thus, through her many and varied academic and other activities, she has played a key role in forging the future of Japanese Studies in the UK.

Hence my decision to award her the Ambassador's Commendation, which she thoroughly deserves. It comprises recognition at the highest level of Dr Macnaughtan's invaluable contribution to closer links between the UK and Japan. In a spirit of profound gratitude for everything she has done, I am very pleased to be the Ambassador who has the privilege of presenting this commendation to her.

Thank you.