

**Remarks by H.E. Mr. HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
for the 26th Summer Reunion for Peace and Friendship
on 30th June 2023**

Good evening,

To begin with, my wife and I would like to extend our heartfelt welcome and gratitude to you all for joining the 26th Summer Reunion for Peace and Friendship this evening. Having overcome the Covid-19 pandemic, we are pleased to see more of you today, compared to last year.

In June, people here in the UK are normally blessed with glorious sunny weather, but in Japan, it is the time of the rainy season. This is when we are treated to the beauty of hydrangeas in all their colourful variety, as you can see from the flower arrangements here in this room. Hydrangeas are said to represent sincere emotions, including gratitude and deep understanding, which is why I believe they are suitable for this occasion.

Since it began in 1997, this Reunion has been one of the most important gatherings in the Embassy's calendar. It is such a unique and special occasion as it embraces different generations, with the younger guests feeling just as involved as the older people they accompany here. Furthermore, it is a gathering of families and friends who have worked enthusiastically for peace and reconciliation – as reflected in the title of this event.

As you all know, our Reunion stems from a programme that provided former prisoners of war and civilian internees with an opportunity to visit Japan in order to cultivate mutual understanding and advance the cause of reconciliation. The annual Reunion has played an important role in adding momentum to this process.

Each year, we mourn some of our friends who have passed away and are no longer able to be with us. Let me take this opportunity to pay tribute to them and extend my condolences to their families and loved ones. At the same time, this Reunion is an ideal occasion for us to recognise those who have made huge efforts towards reconciliation, both in the UK and Japan. I am looking forward to listening to your stories in this regard. Moreover, this occasion helps us look with confidence towards a future in which we can work together, hand in hand, based

on our shared values: namely, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

When it comes to our countries' relations, these have been deepened through several recent exchanges, including Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress attending the State Funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II last September and Their Imperial Highnesses Crown Prince and Crown Princess Akishino visiting the UK for the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III in May of this year. Other notable examples of cooperative interaction between our governments include Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's visit to the UK in January to have a meeting with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak at the Tower of London, where the two leaders pledged to work together to address emerging global challenges while advancing our partnership. In May, Prime Minister Sunak visited Hiroshima to attend the G7 Hiroshima Summit. On that occasion, Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Sunak issued "The Hiroshima Accord: an Enhanced Japan-UK Global Strategic Partnership". Also, both Prime Ministers, together with other G7 leaders, renewed their commitment to working closely for global peace and stability, including by issuing the G7 leaders' Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament, while visiting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum located in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. Moreover, last week Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi visited the UK to attend the Ukraine Recovery Conference, and while here had a meeting with Foreign Secretary James Cleverley as well.

While the international community faces a number of serious challenges, including Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the atrocities committed there that have triggered widespread revulsion and condemnation worldwide, Japan and the UK, as key partners, are well placed to collaborate with each other to address such challenges and find possible solutions. Our strong partnership is bolstered by the trust we share as individuals. I hope that this evening, as at every Reunion, our trust can grow stronger.

In that spirit, I would like to propose a toast. May we all be reunited next year at this most important of events, and until that time, may we all remain in good health and good spirits. Everyone, please join me in saying: *Cheers! Kanpai!*