

Remarks by H.E. Mr. HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the United Kingdom,
For the Japan Self Defense Forces Day Reception
Tuesday 18th July 2023

Air Vice-Marshal Taylor,
Distinguished Guests,

Good evening. I would like to extend my heartfelt welcome to you all. It is my great pleasure to host the annual Japan Self Defence Forces Day Reception in person here at the Embassy of Japan in the UK after more than two years since the Covid-19 pandemic. Taking this opportunity, I would like to say just a few words and express my most sincere gratitude for your contribution to the ever-growing partnership between our two countries.

The history of Japan and the UK go as far back to the outset of the 1600s when British sailor William Adams, also known as MIURA Anjin in Japan, served as a diplomatic advisor to the Tokugawa Shogunate. When Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited the UK in January this year, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak escorted him to see the Japanese armour on display at the Tower of London, which was presented to the King James I of England in 1613 by the Shogun Tokugawa Hidetada, to mark the first ever trade agreement between Great Britain and Japan. After 250 years since then, five young Japanese known as the ‘Choshu Five’ risked their lives travelling to the UK to learn the latest technology and knowledge of Victorian Britain. These are just two examples of events in our shared history that serve to encapsulate the rich relationship between the UK and Japan, one that remains of mutual inspiration and cooperation.

Reiterated by the Hiroshima Accord signed on the eve of the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May this year, Japan and the UK open a new chapter of their relationship. We are bound by our shared values, as well as interests, of freedom, democracy, rule of law, fundamental human rights, and open and fair trade. These values are at the heart of our work together for global security, resilience, and innovation.

Today we find ourselves at a turning point in history. In a more contested world, the erosion of these values of the international system demonstrates that the security and prosperity of Europe and the Indo-Pacific are more and more inseparable. Russia's flagrant violation of international law through its invasion of Ukraine has global implications, which have set a precedent encouraging unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion in other parts of the world too.

In light of these challenges, it is necessary to strengthen the partnership among like-minded countries of the world. In this sense, for Japan our global strategic partnership with the UK has indispensable importance. We stand shoulder to shoulder tackling these unprecedented challenges, promoting security, resilience, and prosperity as well as advancing the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

It is why as stated in the Hiroshima Accord, both our countries "will strengthen our shared security capabilities to help safeguard global peace and stability. Building on recent landmark defence agreements, we commit to closer consultation on security issues, to carry out an ambitious programme of larger and more complex joint exercises and planning, and resolve to bring our defence and security industries closer together."

The commitments of the Hiroshima Accord are gradually being materialised, supported by the UK's reminiscent engagement in the Indo-Pacific articulated in its "Integrated Review Refresh" appeared last March. The trilateral Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP) is definitely a future proof of our combat air sectors. It will surely enhance investment in our technology and deepen the integration of supply chains with the private sector, with companies such as BAE Systems, Leonardo, Rolls-Royce, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) and IHI Corporation.

The landmark Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) and deployment of the UK's military assets to the Indo-Pacific region will certainly serve to reinforce the joint capabilities between the Japan Self-Defence Forces (JSDF) and British Armed Forces. One example is the 'Vigilant Isles 23' bilateral exercise that will be held this autumn in Japan. As we strive toward these accomplishments, Japan and the UK are better positioned to champion global peace and stability according to a rules-based international order.

We gather here this evening to honour our respective commitment to the ever-blossoming relationship between Japan and the UK. Let us celebrate our achievements as we look forward to a secure and peaceful future.

Thank you very much.