

Remarks by H.E. Mr. HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at ‘Celebrating 5 Years of Japan House London’
on 21st Sep 2023

Distinguished Guests,

It is a great pleasure to celebrate the fifth anniversary of Japan House London together with all of you.

In 2018 JHL opened in Kensington, one of the liveliest areas in London, and was honoured by the presence of the then HRH The Duke of Cambridge, the current Prince William, at the grand opening ceremony. Since its opening, JHL has been the most important and successful organisation in promoting Japan in not only London and the UK, but also Europe and beyond. It has attracted a wide audience, from Japan connoisseurs to passers-by including those visiting London from other countries.

Over the course of five years, the total number of visitors to JHL has exceeded 1.5 million. This is a most impressive number, reflecting JHL's remarkable achievement.

Mr Mike Houlihan, its first Director General, provided JHL with a robust start and with his profound experiences in art and culture, making it an epicentre for new trends in Japanese culture. Later, COVID-19 posed a severe challenge to our entire society including JHL. However, Mike and his team have made strenuous efforts in sustaining JHL in the cultural community in London through extending its reach in the virtual and digital domains.

In October 2022, when the pandemic had almost been overcome, we welcomed a new Director General, Mr Sam Thorne. He has been lending various new initiatives including collaboration with influential museums and Japan-related institutions across the UK. It was very fortunate that when JHL needed to make a re-start in the post pandemic scene, we found a perfect

conductor with energetic passion and fresh eyes for Japanese culture. Based on what Mike established and with Sam's leadership, I am fully confident that JHL will be forging ahead in new directions.

JHL not simply exhibits objects but also demonstrates a living culture or philosophy through telling the stories behind the objects. I believe many distinguished guests have experienced that through such exhibitions as metalworking in Tsubame-Sanjo, the woodwork of Hida Takayama and the art of Kumihimo.

JHL also provides opportunities for introducing Japan's policies, initiatives and values, collaborating extensively with thinktanks and private corporations.

All of this is aimed at presenting answers to the big question of 'what Japan is' from a variety of perspectives.

May I extend my sincere gratitude to the corporate partners, trustees, steering committee members, non-executive directors, staff and particularly all frequent visitors to JHL for your bottomless support for this unparalleled place. JHL is a platform for cultural exchanges and mutual understanding between people of the UK and Japan and a symbol of the promising ties between the two countries.

Now, let me ask you to join me in a toast. To the further success of JHL, the health and happiness of everyone, and the further strengthening of the friendship and cooperation between Japan and the UK. Cheers! Kampai!