

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of all your guests, may I express our deep appreciation of your inviting us to this reception for the British Japanese Law Association, marking the Association's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. During that period, the Association has made a significant contribution to fostering links between the two legal professions, and indeed personal friendships between British and Japanese lawyers.

During the past year, further progress has been made towards developing a strong relationship between the courts and the lawyers of our two countries. Japanese judges and court officials have visited our Supreme Court in order to study our ways of working, and we have been pleased to welcome them. In July of this year, our Lord Chancellor and Japan's Justice Minister, Mr Saito, signed the first Memorandum of Cooperation on Justice Issues, under which legal information and expertise will be shared, and views exchanged, through regular dialogue. In the same month, trade ministers, including those of the UK and Japan, signed the Accession Protocol which will enable the UK to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade agreement which should facilitate access to markets.

Today I have been delighted to welcome Justice Nagamine of the Supreme Court of Japan – and your predecessor as Ambassador - to the Supreme Court in London, with colleagues from Tokyo. We have had fruitful discussions about areas of future cooperation.

In November, I will be spending a week in Tokyo, thanks to the generous invitation extended to me by Chief Justice Tokura, for which I am profoundly grateful. A full programme of discussions and lectures is being prepared, and I am sure that I will learn a great deal. I hope that the experience and expertise that I can share will also be of value to my hosts.

It is not only at the level of the courts that UK-Japanese legal relations are becoming closer. Japanese law firms are becoming increasingly active in the UK, and UK law firms have increased opportunities in Japan, following the Foreign Lawyers Act of 2020. In the field of law, as in other fields, Japan and the UK are steadily forging stronger ties, based on the shared values that underpin our societies. We all recognise the importance of the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, the independence of the legal profession, and the important contribution which the law and lawyers make to our society and our prosperity.

So thank you, Ambassador, for welcoming us here, and my congratulations to the Association on reaching its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.