

Remarks by H.E. Mr. HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at the Wales All Japanese Companies Networking Event
hosted by SONY UK Technology Centre
9th November 2023

First Minister Drakeford,
Mr Wilson,
Distinguished Guests,

Good afternoon! Or it is much better to say, Prynhawn Da!

It is such a pleasure to be with you all today at this monumental networking event, which brings together Japanese companies from across Wales for the first time. This event also follows up the Japan-Wales Kizuna reception held at the Embassy of Japan last year to celebrate the significant milestone of 50 years of Japanese investment in Wales. I would like to express my great thanks to SONY for hosting and organising this highly significant occasion.

I am delighted that First Minister Drakeford is here today, as it was an honour to have him attend the Kizuna reception last December. I know that the First Minister and I share the same passion for and commitment to a successful partnership between Japan and Wales, and his attendance today means a lot to me. I am also very thankful to the Wales Japan Club for supporting this event today—they are an important society for building connections and a sense of community for Japanese people living in Wales.

Since taking up my role as Ambassador to the UK in February 2021, I have had the great pleasure of visiting Wales on numerous occasions. Besides its well-developed business environment, its natural beauty and warm, welcoming people make it very clear to me why Wales has become such an attractive destination for Japanese businesses and their employees.

Currently, there are more than 50 Japanese companies that are operating very successfully in Wales, having created over 6,000 highly skilled jobs. Today, we are joined by a great number of technological innovators and business experts that are going to be integral to promoting a successful economic partnership between Japan and Wales. I believe the networking opportunities available today will broaden the business links between Japan and Wales.

I'm delighted that many Japanese companies in attendance today have made great efforts to create deep links and share their culture with the Welsh local communities. As a result, I am sure that many of them are now good corporate citizens of Wales. To mention just one example, most recently, SONY helped to relaunch the first post-pandemic Cardiff University Japanese Speech Contest in June, supporting the judging process, and contributing to the awards the students could win. Through this competition, students were able to demonstrate their great interest in and passion for the Japanese language.

In addition to a prosperous economic partnership, Japan and Wales have a number of cultural connections that have been fostered over many decades. Wales's national sport of rugby has seen a meteoric rise in popularity in Japan over the past decade. I was hoping that I would be able to see a Japan vs Wales quarter-final match at the Rugby World Cup this year; although I did not get my wish this time, I will be waiting in earnest for the next World Cup in Australia!

This relationship over the past 50 years seems to flourish more with each year that passes, and it is great to see real commitment from both sides to keep this going. By coming together today and unlocking and expanding our business networks, we will be well-positioned to shape the future of the enduring Japan-Wales relationship. Through the continuation of such events, I am confident that the next 50 years of our relationship will only become deeper and more prosperous.

I would like to conclude by offering my huge thanks to SONY for putting this fantastic networking opportunity together, and to the distinguished guests for continuing to support a strong and successful Japan-Wales relationship. I truly hope that today's networking event is the first of many to come.

Thank you very much indeed.