

Remarks by H.E. Mr. HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at the Reception and Dinner for celebrating the success of
the Greater Manchester Mission to Japan in December 2023
on 13th February 2024

Mayor Burnham,
Councillor Craig,
Distinguished Guests,

Let me begin by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to you all for attending to the occasion this evening. I thank you, Jo Ahmed, Honorary Consul of Japan in Manchester as well for putting this event together.

I believe that last year was a very fruitful and successful year for the Japan - UK relationship. The great strides were achieved as we signed the Hiroshima Accord: an Enhanced Japan-UK Global Strategic Partnership, and the Accession of the UK to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Among those, the most outstanding was the visit to Japan of the Greater Manchester delegation led by Mayor Burnham in early December.

GMCA's last year visit to Japan was considered as significant in many ways. Firstly, it was unprecedented for a region in the UK to send such a large and substantial delegation to Japan. Secondly, the membership of the delegation was very diverse and focused not only on business, but also included representatives from various fields such as academia, culture, and sport. Last but not least, the delegation has achieved greater success than any other similar delegations ever before, thanks to very good preparation in advance. On the 1st of February, when I attended Labour Party Business International Reception at the Oval, a famous cricket stadium located south of London, I was particularly impressed by the success of this delegation, who were introduced to the almost 500 attending guests as one of the most salient overseas activities led by a Labour Party Mayor last year. I am pretty sure that other mayors are rushing to copy the secret of this success.

I only regret that I could not go with the delegation to Japan but I received a good report that fruitful meetings were held between the Mayor of Osaka, Governor of Osaka, the Tokyo Governor, and many Japanese businesses and other leaders during the visit. The signing of the new Memorandum of Understanding for the Partnership of Friendship and Cooperation between Osaka City and GMCA will further cement the bilateral relations between the two cities and will undoubtedly strengthen their ties in a wide range of sectors including sport, culture, and trade. I am very keen to see how these commitments will be implemented down the road.

As Greater Manchester's 2038 net zero targets are approaching, it must be commended that new partnerships with Daikin and Panasonic respectively have been formed, and that talks have also taken place with Hitachi and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to explore more collaboration with Greater Manchester to deliver decarbonisation targets.

Also noteworthy was the University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University's new strategic partnerships with Japanese counterparts. These partnerships will lead to more rigorous engagement between these world-leading institutions on environmental sustainability, biological science, clean energy, hydrogen, and many other research areas. In terms of culture, I'm also pleased that the Halle Orchestra is planning the next round of a tour to Japan in the near future.

Before concluding I would like to reiterate my great gratitude and congratulations to you all for your continued efforts in bringing a brighter and more connected future for Osaka and Manchester, and for Japan and the UK. It is my genuine belief that one plus one does not simply equal two but could be much more. It will be through the continued collaboration and passion that people like you are showing that we can create a more innovative, global and diversified society, I am very excited to see the fruits of your endeavours in the next couple of years, especially in 2025, when the Osaka-Kansai Expo will take place in Japan.

Thank you very much indeed.