

Remarks by H.E. Mr. HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at the “Expo 2025 Launch Programme” hosted by,
Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce on 25th April 2024

Chief Executive Officer Mr Britton,
Dr Spencer, MP,
Distinguished Guests,

I am truly delighted to be with you all here at the beautiful Thames Valley this afternoon. Taking this opportunity, I would like to extend my appreciation to not only the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce, but also the British Chamber of Commerce and Konami Digital Entertainment, for organising and supporting today’s event.

The Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (TVCC), with its almost 5,000 member companies, provide outstanding examples of how Japanese businesses have thrived and expanded through the support of UK business communities. The TVCC has attracted globally acclaimed Japanese companies over a long period of time, many of them have grown up in the UK as its members, and have contributed to local communities.

Today we gather to mark the one-year countdown to Expo 2025, Osaka, Kansai, Japan. Looking back at history, many of you know, I am sure, that the first Great Exhibition took place in London in 1851. The first Expo showcased the achievements of the Industrial Revolution, with its symbol the Crystal Palace in place. And, more importantly, what has evolved from the technologies and products introduced there is still evident today. Examples include the precursor to the fax machine and the first voting machine, both of which have been vital to our communications later on and the functioning of our democracy even today.

The significance of these exhibitions has continued unabated, a trend that

will persist into the Expo 2025. This time, our aim is to transform Osaka into a “Testing Ground for Future Society” aligning with this Expo's theme “Designing Future Society for Our Lives”. The centerpiece of the Expo will be the wooden “Grand Roof” designed to represent unity in diversity and will symbolise the Expo’s commitment to life and sustainability.

Additionally, flying car transport services will introduce a new dimension of mobility. Moreover, a living heart model made from iPS cells, a groundbreaking advancement for future medical practice developed by a Nobel Prize laureate Professor Shinya Yamanaka, will be showcased. The Expo 2025 will be an innovative display of all of the science, technology and culture that Japan will offer to the future society.

The International pavilions will play a crucial role in fostering a more diversified future society. In this regard, I would like to congratulate the UK on the recent launch of its pavilion. It will offer people a new experience from the UK as a glimpse into what the future may hold. As the bilateral partnership between Japan and the UK has become stronger and more dynamic, particularly with the Hiroshima Accord signed last year by Prime Ministers Fumio Kishida and Rishi Sunak, and the accession of the UK to the CPTPP, we are hopeful that more people from the UK, including political, business and academic leaders, will visit Osaka next year. The Expo 2025 provides a perfect platform to create new business, cultural, and scientific links between Japan and the UK. Through such events, we not only showcase how far we have come as a partnership, but also find new avenues for further development and fresh collaboration.

It is also meaningful that TVCC has a close relationship with the Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Such history, especially the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed between the Osaka and Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce's in 2014, has been incredibly successful with multiple delegations visiting Osaka from the Thames Valley

since its signing. This strong foundation could lead the TVCC to seize further investment and business opportunities arise from the Expo next year. I hope that Today's event also helps to kick off and further propel such discussions.

Today, we are joined by several regional businesses who are interested in Japan. I hope that the Osaka Expo next year can help build greater collaboration and investment at not just the national level, but at the regional level as well.

With the UK being the founder of the Great Exhibition, and the country to open this event up for all of global society to participate in, I hope that the Osaka 2025 Expo will be another chance to further build on the history and foundation that the UK has built. Next year's Expo will undoubtedly be a huge success and I am looking forward to seeing what the future holds for our wider society, in every region throughout our respective countries as we innovate to create a more sustainable, happy, and empowered future.

Thank you very much.