Remarks by H.E. Mr. HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at the Awarding of the Ambassador's Commendation
to Professor Geraldine Thomas
on 4th July 2024

Professor Thomas,
Distinguished guests,

Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us here at my residence to mark this celebratory occasion.

Today, I have the privilege of awarding the Ambassador's Commendation to Professor Geraldine Thomas in appreciation of her outstanding expert contribution over the years to helping people understand the real risks of radiation exposure following the accident at the Fukushima nuclear power station. Though I'm sure those present here today are well aware of her many achievements, and indeed some of you have worked alongside her, I would like to touch upon just few of these.

First, as you will all know, Geraldine has enjoyed a long and distinguished career in the field of molecular pathology, mainly at Imperial College London, making a vast number of seminal contributions to science and public health, not just here in the UK but around the world. A large proportion of her impressive career was dedicated to studying the molecular biology of thyroid cancer post-Chernobyl and it was then that she established the Chernobyl Tissue Bank in 1998. As Director of this Bank, she collects, documents, and stores samples donated by patients with thyroid tumours who live in the areas affected by the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, providing an important resource to underpin her subsequent research.

It was indeed this expertise and experience gained from her work on Chernobyl and her time at Imperial that would be invaluable to the people of Japan. Not long after the accident at the Fukushima nuclear power station, Geraldine, in her capacity as an expert, delivered a clear message to the Japanese people about the reality of radiation and the health risks of radiation exposure. This was communicated in an easy-to-understand but also scientific manner, based on the comprehensive epidemiology studies carried

out following the Chernobyl accident. The message she sent continues to support Japanese understanding to this day. She also visited Fukushima several times and actively engaged in communication with local residents to ensure that they correctly understood the risks of radiation exposure and thyroid screening tests. Her ability to provide clear communication to the public based on scientific research proved invaluable to Japan at this most challenging time, and also helped to improve international understanding of the issue.

More recently, when the Japanese Government announced that it would be releasing treated water from the Fukushima nuclear power station into the sea, Geraldine, based on her scientific expertise, gave a number of interviews to media outlets, highlighting the IAEA report stating that the release was consistent with international standards and explaining that the risk to the environment and our health was negligible. This clear, concise and informed view, based on scientific evidence, helped to allay any fears or misunderstandings about radiation among the public as well as the wider international community.

This just touches upon only few of Geraldine's vital contributions and achievements, underpinned by her experience and expertise, and shows that she is clearly a most worthy recipient of this Commendation. Today I extend my sincerest appreciation to Geraldine and have great pleasure in celebrating this award together with her family, friends and colleagues, who I am sure have also played an important part in her momentous accomplishments.

Please join me in congratulating Professor Geraldine Thomas on this richly deserved award.

Congratulations!