

Remarks by H.E. Mr. HAYASHI Hajime,  
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,  
for the 27th Summer Reunion for Peace and Friendship  
on 12th July 2024

Distinguished Guests,

To begin with, my wife and I would like to extend our heartfelt welcome and gratitude to you all for joining the 27th Summer Reunion for Peace and Friendship this evening. This is my fourth year in London as Ambassador of Japan and each year I look forward to seeing and hearing from you on this occasion. Some of the friends who attended previous Reunions and contributed so much to reconciliation have unfortunately passed away. Let me take this opportunity to pay tribute to all of them and extend my condolences to their families and loved ones. The sky looks like mourning the loss as well in the rainy weather in London this morning and the rainy season in Japan, but I hope beautiful hydrangeas and seeing familiar faces today will console us all.

As you all know, Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress of Japan paid a State Visit to the United Kingdom in the last week of June at the invitation of His Majesty King Charles III. I was pleased that this State Visit, which was postponed once because of the COVID-19, has finally taken place. This was the third State Visit by Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress of Japan to the UK, following the first one in 1971 and the second one in 1988. It is widely reported and evaluated that the ties between our two countries have been further strengthened through this State Visit. I am particularly delighted and deeply moved to be able to host this reception only two weeks after such a historic moment.

Please allow me to quote what His Majesty The King mentioned at the State Banquet held at the Buckingham Palace on 25 June. “At the core of our partnership is a close friendship; one based on a mutual understanding of the

importance of international rules and global institutions, forged from the lessons of history, including its darkest years.”

Then, His Majesty The Emperor said in his speech that “There was previously the sad period during which the friendly relationship between our two countries suffered, and hence I am struck by profound feelings as I extend my thoughts to what was in the minds of my grandfather the Emperor Showa and subsequently my father the Emperor Emeritus as they set foot in this country after times of great difficulty, as emperors of Japan at the invitation of Her late Majesty. The Empress and I would like to express our deep respect and gratitude to those people who have dedicated immeasurable efforts to the friendship between our two countries extending firmly into the future.” End of quote.

This Reunion, which began in 1997 and is now in its 27<sup>th</sup> year, was once marked by protests against Japan during the previous State Visit in 1998. As we all know, reconciliation is not at all an easy task. We must not forget that this process has been accelerated by the volunteers who have worked tirelessly as catalysts in a number of significant grass-roots activities carried out to heal the wounds of the War and to seek reconciliation and new friendship in peace. Building on these efforts, we are now able to celebrate our reunion of friends, both British and Japanese, young and old, every year, renewing our old friendships and sometimes finding new ones, while passing the lessons on to succeeding generations. I would like to thank you all again on your contribution to our partnership.

The Japan-UK partnership has become stronger and more dynamic, sharing the values of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. I am also confident that in the face of new and serious global challenges, Japan and the UK will continue to work together as key partners to find solutions. The agenda for cooperation set out in the Hiroshima Accord signed last year by Prime Ministers is progressing well, including the launch of the GCAP, Global Combat Air Programme, and the UK’s accession to the CPTPP,

Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, both further strengthening the Japan-UK partnership. The RAA, Reciprocal Access Agreement, the framework for defence cooperation between Japan and the UK, has come into force, further strengthening security cooperation between the two countries. In addition, under the expansion of the Japan's Working Holiday Scheme and the UK's Youth Mobility Scheme starting this year, young generation of Japan and the UK will be able to wider exchanges and deepen mutual understanding.

Our strong partnership is bolstered by the trust we share as individuals. I hope that this evening, as at every Reunion, our trust can grow stronger.

In that spirit, I would like to propose a toast. May we all be reunited next year at this most important of events, and until that time, may we all remain in good health and good spirits.

*Cheers! Kanpai!*