

Remarks by H.E. Mr HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the United Kingdom,
for the Japan Self-Defense Forces Day Reception
on Friday 6th September 2024

My Lords,
Excellencies,
Ministers,
Admirals,
Distinguished Guests,

I would like to extend my heartfelt welcome to you all on board of JS Kashima this evening. It is indeed my great pleasure to host the annual Japan Self-Defense Forces Day Reception on the occasion of JS Kashima's port call in London. I would like to take this opportunity to say just a few words, reflecting on our relationship from the past to present and also to the future, and express my most sincere gratitude for your contribution to the ever-growing partnership between Japan and the United Kingdom.

Sea transportation and the navy play a prominent role in the history of relations between Japan and the UK. At the beginning of the 17th Century, the English sailor William Adams, also known as MIURA Anjin in Japan, appointed as a retainer, or a bannerman in another word, and served as a diplomatic and military advisor to the Tokugawa Shogunate. As some of you know, the best-seller "Shogun" by James Clavell, which was broadcast as a net-drama series and became popular this year, is based on his real life story.

In more recent times, in the late 19th century Britain helped Japan build a navy critical for its national defence. In the 1870s, TOGO Heihachiro, a young Japanese naval officer, studied at the Thames Nautical Training College, not very far away from here. He went on to be appointed Fleet Admiral and was the victorious Commander in the Battle of Tsushima, which determined the outcome of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905.

These two historical figures, each in his own way, contributed to the development of the deep and mutually beneficial relationship between our two countries, which has continued and has been enjoyed by many of us. By the same token, some of the midshipmen and women you will meet today at this reception may well be among the people who will play a similarly significant role in our future partnership.

Over the last several decades we have been bound by our shared values, as illustrated by our cast-iron commitment to freedom, democracy, the rule of law, fundamental human rights, and open and fair trade. These values are at the heart of our work in the cause of a rules-based international order.

Today we find ourselves at an inflection point in history where we face serious challenges from those with values and principles very different from ours. In a more contested world, the erosion of these values underpinning the international system demonstrates that the security and prosperity of the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific are becoming more and more inseparable. Russia's unprovoked, unjust and brutal war of aggression against Ukraine has continued more than two years and half. We are all aware of the malign role of North Korea, which exports ammunitions and missiles to support Russia's aggression, greatly increasing the suffering of the people in Ukraine. In light of these challenges, our global strategic partnership with the UK has indispensable importance. We stand shoulder to shoulder tackling these unprecedented challenges, promoting security, resilience, and prosperity both in the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific regions.

We have achieved the commitments laid out in the Hiroshima Accord. The Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) has been ratified and applied to UK troops visiting Japan. Meanwhile, this overseas training cruise has become the platform for the first ever visit to the UK by SDF troops under the RAA. We have also reached an agreement to apply JSDF Asset Protection Measures to the UK. Through these means we will take the level of cooperative activities by our defence assets to an even higher level. I expect that the deployment of the UK's CSG 25 to the Indo-Pacific region next year will apply this higher level of cooperation.

The trilateral Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP) marks another major achievement in our defence endeavours. Japan finished the ratification process of the GCAP International Government Organization Treaty this June. I understand the UK will follow suit very soon. Together with Italy, we are now going full speed ahead to establish the international organisation “GIGO” and the Joint Venture in the UK. Through the leadership of these organisations, thousands of talented specialists, engineers, and officials from the three countries will work side by side to develop state-of-the-art technologies and to bring about a future solution for our combat air sectors.

As you all know, Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress of Japan paid a State Visit to the United Kingdom in this June at the invitation of His Majesty King Charles III. There were plenty of memorable episodes, but there was one which made a particular impression on myself. It was the carriage procession from the Horse Guards Parade to Buckingham Palace. The Mall was bedecked with Japanese and British flags. Underneath them, Japanese, British and other people from around the world cheering and waving small flags in warm welcome as their Majesties, escorted by the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, made their way towards Buckingham Palace. Watching this scene unfold was extremely moving. It also symbolised the ever-growing scale of the Anglo-Japanese partnership.

We have gathered here this evening to honour our mutual commitment to the ever-blossoming relationship between Japan and the UK. Let us celebrate our achievements as we look forward to a securer and more peaceful future.

Thank you very much.