

Remarks by H.E. Mr HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at the awarding of the Foreign Minister's Commendation
to Mrs Phillida Purvis
on 24th September 2024

Phillida, Christopher and members of the Purvis Family,
Distinguished Guests,

It is my great privilege as Ambassador of Japan to the UK to present the Foreign Minister's Commendation to Mrs Phillida Purvis.

I understand, and I hope I am not wrong on this, that Phillida first became involved with Japan as an undergraduate at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), where she studied Japanese. She then did her postgraduate studies at the University of Tokyo as a Monbusho Scholar. Since then, she has continued to engage with Japan, Japanese people and culture, and has worked in various capacities to promote mutual understanding and friendship between Japan and the UK. It is very difficult to adequately convey the full extent of her involvement with Japan because she has involved herself in such a wide range of activities. But let me highlight just a few examples among her many notable contributions.

Phillida spent a few years in the British Embassy in Tokyo working for the Diplomatic Service. She subsequently continued her Japan-related work experience in a variety of ways, including serving with a think-tank, a private company and a university. She then became Deputy Director of the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation from 1993 to 1998 and Executive Director of the UK-Japan 21st Century Group in 1998 and 1999. Furthermore, she was active in work on reconciliation over many years, including organising services at Canterbury Cathedral each August, which continued until 2015.

She is the Founder and Director of Links Japan, a non-profit organisation established in 1998 to promote exchanges between civil society

organisations in Japan and the UK. Links Japan focuses on issues of social inclusion, community regeneration and international development cooperation. Notable activities include leading a group from Kagoshima to Uganda to deliver education and development programmes. In addition, she organised exchanges between the NPOs and NGOs of Japan and the UK, including a major joint NGO conference and the translation of the Japanese NGO Directory into English. She also led a long-running exchange with the Japan Society for the rehabilitation of people with disabilities.

Phillida is an original member of the Steering Committee of Japan House London, and a Trustee of Japan House London Trust. JHL opened in 2018 and has since become a major, widely recognised Japanese cultural institution and a communication hub for Japan in London. The total number of visitors to JHL has now exceeded 2 million. Phillida has been actively involved in advising on the activities and management issues at JHL since its inception. As Chair of the Steering Committee and the Board of Trustees of Japan House London, I have constantly been helped by Phillida's dedication and prudence. Her efforts have also been instrumental in the success of JHL as a platform for cultural exchange and mutual understanding between the peoples of the UK and Japan.

The relationship between Japan and the UK is now stronger than ever before. This is not only because of the achievements of the two governments, but also because of the many people in the private sector who are committed to deepening our ties in much wider areas than the two governments have addressed so far. The relationship between the two countries is unique in its diversity and depth, including at the cultural, academic, business and civil society levels. I fully recognise and respect the fact that today's bilateral relations owe a great deal to the exchanges, thoughts and activities of the many people involved, and Phillida certainly has been one of the key players in such exchanges. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to her.

Now please join me in congratulating Phillida on her great achievement. Congratulations!