

Remarks by H.E. Mr HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at the Reception to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Japan-UK Science
and Technology Cooperation Agreement
on 15th October 2024

My Lords,
Professors,
Distinguished Guests,

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to you all for joining us this evening, as we celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Japan-UK Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement. It is a great privilege to have Lord Vallance, Lord Waldegrave, Dame Angela, Sir Paul and so many esteemed figures here at the Embassy of Japan to mark this landmark occasion.

It was over 30 years ago, on 13th June 1994, when the Japan-UK Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement was signed, in Tokyo, by the then Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr Koji Kakizawa, and the then Science Minister of the United Kingdom, Lord Waldegrave, who is kind enough to join us and make a toast this evening. This ambitious agreement called for more scholarships, increased exchange of researchers, and greater research collaboration between Japan and the UK.

First and foremost, it is clear that this groundbreaking agreement has resulted in an extremely wide range of successful bilateral cooperation across scientific fields as varied as biotechnology, medicine, semiconductors, space, nuclear, and information and communications. The agreement has led to cooperation between many research institutions, as well as at the level of individual academics, and in recent years Japan-UK joint research projects have produced many high-quality research papers that are world-renowned.

This has been achieved by combining and building up two key approaches sector by sector, firstly by promoting top-down research in line with Japanese and British government priorities, while at the same time by promoting curiosity-driven, bottom-up research cooperation and human resource development, as supported by institutions such as JSPS and the Royal Society.

It is also true that Japan-UK scientific and technological cooperation has grown to tackle global issues – not only for the benefit of both countries, but also beyond our bilateral relationship. This includes our joint efforts on ageing societies, where neuroscience and measures to tackle dementia are progressing both in Japan and the UK. Works are also under way to develop new energy sources, with Japan and the UK working closely together on advanced modular reactors.

Furthermore, as these research collaborations have progressed in concrete terms, we have also shared our scientific findings, knowledge and experiences. One notable example of this came following the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. At the time there was great confusion and anxiety among the public on the safety in Japan. But a strategy of risk communication was quickly adopted in the UK, and information and explanation was provided to the wider public that it was safe to remain in Japan based on scientific evidence.

Building on our existing cooperation to date, we must now explore future opportunities for cooperation on new and emerging key technologies. Last year, the Japan-UK Joint Committee on Science and Technology met to identify and agree priorities for future collaboration between the Japanese and British governments and scientific agencies in emerging areas, such as engineering biology, quantum technologies, AI and fusion technology.

Looking ahead, we must also focus on the development and exchange of

human resources in the field of science and technology. In June this year, Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan paid a State Visit to the UK, and it was most pleasing to hear that His Majesty The Emperor and His Majesty King Charles were unanimous in their praise of the close collaboration between young Japanese and British researchers, and the myriad of areas where Japan and the UK lead the world in collaboration and cooperation. In addition, His Majesty the Emperor visited The Francis Crick Institute, where he was guided by Sir Paul, CEO of the Institute, who is also present here this evening. During the visit, His Majesty was engaged in exchanges with promising young researchers from Japan.

As some of you may know, my term as Ambassador will be coming to an end. As I prepare to leave the UK before the end of this month, I am extremely optimistic about the progress of Japan-UK science and technology cooperation, and believe that it will continue to go from strength to strength. I trust that today's event will be an excellent opportunity to reenergize our new era of long-continuing cooperation.

Thank you very much.