

Remarks by H.E. Mr. Hiroshi Suzuki,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
for the 28th Summer Reunion for Peace
and Friendship
on 27th June 2025

Distinguished Guests,

I would like to extend my heartfelt welcome to you all for joining the Summer Reunion for Peace and Friendship this evening.

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. I am delighted that so many people from across the UK have come to attend this event.

The Summer Reunion began in 1997. This is the 28th reception we have held. I thank all the people who endeavored tirelessly to heal the wounds of the war, seek reconciliation and foster friendship.

In particular, please allow me to express my sincere gratitude to Ms Holmes, Ms Browning, Dr Pritchard, Ms McDonald, Reverend Sato and Reverend Ishii, among other people.

As the years go by, it is encouraging to see the children, and grandchildren, of those who actually experienced the ordeals of the war are here today, taking part in the Summer Reunion.

In my previous capacity as Ambassador of Japan to India, I had an opportunity to visit Kohima last year. It was the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Kohima.

Thanks to the leadership of Shri Neiphu Rio, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Nagaland, a peace memorial was erected for all those who fought in Kohima. I was invited to the opening ceremony where I laid a wreath, praying for all their souls to rest in peace.

On that occasion, I visited the Second World War Museum in Kohima. There, in powerful documentary films and written testimony, I saw the firsthand accounts of the fierce fighting in Kohima eight decades ago.

We should never forget what happened in the war, its devastating impact on each individual - indescribable ordeals, which left deep wounds in the hearts of many people.

As we all know, reconciliation has not been an easy task. It took so many years to try to heal the wounds. I am deeply grateful for the commitment, dedication, and tireless efforts of all the people who volunteered to promote what is such a worthy endeavour.

Thanks to your dedicated work, we are now able to celebrate our reunion of friends, both British and Japanese, young and old, every year.

We have been renewing our old friendships and fostering new ones, while passing on the lessons to the generations that follow. I would like to thank you all once again for your invaluable contributions.

Over the past 80 years since the end of the Second World War, Japan has rejected militarism and steadily walked its path as a peace-loving nation.

Japan is leading the efforts to realise the vision of Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

Today, Japan and the UK are united by fundamental values : freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

Japan and the UK share common strategic interests. Under the G7 solidarity, Japan is extending maximum support to Ukraine, and imposing draconian sanctions on Russia.

Japan and the UK are closely cooperating together for global peace and security. We have a joint project for developing a next generation fighter jet. The British Carrier Strike Group, led by the aircraft carrier, HMS Prince of Wales, will visit Japan at the end of this summer.

Japan played an important role in welcoming the UK into the CPTPP, which has gained strategic importance in the current economic climate.

Exchanges between our younger generations are critically important for our vital relationship to flourish in the future. If you are under 30 years old, please take advantage of our Working Holiday Visa scheme. You can stay for up to 2 years in Japan.

I would like to conclude by expressing my sincere hope that this reunion will continue to serve as an opportunity for both older and younger generations to reflect on the lessons of the past, heal the wounds of the war, seek reconciliation, and foster friendship.

As friends like no other, let us join hands to contribute to global peace and prosperity, and walk together toward a brighter future.

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!

END