

Remarks by H.E. Mr Hiroshi Suzuki,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK, on the
occasion of the Presentation Ceremony of
Japanese Foreign Minister's Commendation
to the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation

Honorary Chair Sasakawa,
Lord St Andrews,
Ambassador Madden,
My Lords, My Lady,
Members of Parliament,
Mr Clark,
Distinguished guests,

Thank you very much for coming to the
Japanese Embassy this evening to join me in a
huge celebration to mark the 40th anniversary
of the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation.

On this auspicious occasion, it is my privilege to present the Japanese Foreign Minister's Commendation to the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation in recognition of its remarkable contribution to deepening mutual understanding and promoting friendship between Japan and the UK for the past four decades.

Honorary Chair Sasakawa is often quoted as saying, "There are more and more issues that governments alone cannot address. We need the power of non-profit organisations." I could not agree more.

For the last 40 years, the GB Sasakawa Foundation has carried out a wide range of projects and has become a true pillar of promoting Japan–UK relations.

In 2023 alone, the GB Sasakawa Foundation supported 210 projects with grants totaling £840,000, covering diverse fields including arts and culture, humanities and social issues, Japanese language education, medicine and health, science, technology, environment and many other areas.

Each year, the Sasakawa Japanese Studies Studentship Programme supports around 30 Japanese postgraduate students, while the Japan Experience Study Tour offers UK students a chance to experience life and culture in Japan.

In the medical field, one of the Foundation's most recent initiatives is a joint research programme on antimicrobial resistance, in addition to its ongoing support through the Butterfield Awards.

I should also highlight the Translation Prize, launched in 2023, which helps bring Japanese literature to readers in the UK and around the world.

And this is just for one year. Can you imagine doing this for the last 40 years!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the key leaders of the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation.

First, my heartfelt gratitude goes to Honorary Chair Yohei Sasakawa, who has come all the way from Japan to grace this evening's ceremony. His unwavering support has been instrumental in the Sasakawa Foundation's remarkable achievement over the decades. His life-long personal commitment to fighting leprosy is reflected in Sasakawa Foundation's focus on medicine and health.

My deep gratitude also goes to the Earl of St Andrews. Here, I would like to pause for a moment and ask everyone to join me in a moment of silence to remember his beloved mother, Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent. (Moment of silence.) Thank you very much.

For thirty years, the Earl of St Andrews guided the Sasakawa Foundation, and for twenty years, led the Foundation as its Chairman. With his wisdom and vision, he has made an invaluable contribution to the GB Sasakawa Foundation's enormous success and progress.

I welcome Ambassador Paul Madden as the new Chairman of Sasakawa Foundation. As we all know, he served as the British Ambassador to Japan for four years until 2021.

While in Japan, he visited all 47 prefectures and gained wide popularity on Twitter with his “39 things I love about Japan” series, which eventually became a book. I am confident that, under his new leadership, the GB Sasakawa Foundation will continue to grow and prosper.

Over the past 40 years, the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation has truly worked hand in hand with the Japanese Government to promote Japan-UK relations, and I would like to once again express my heartfelt gratitude and deep respect to everyone involved over the last 4 decades.

Let me say in closing that I am convinced that the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation will continue to serve as a powerful driving force to take Japan-UK relations to even greater heights in the years and decades ahead.

Thank you very much.