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Remarks by H.E. Mr Hiroshi Suzuki,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at the ZSL Cherry Tree Planting Ceremony
on 27th March 2025

Distinguished Guests,

It is my great pleasure to attend my first Cherry Tree Planting Ceremony since my arrival in London, as Ambassador of Japan to the UK.

The Sakura Cherry Tree Project was initiated by Mr Keisaku Sandy Sano, then-Chairman of the Japan Association in the UK, and launched together with Mr Takashi Tsukamoto, then-Chairman of the Japan-British Society, and myself, then-Prime Minister Abe's Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs. It was conceived as a symbol of the never-changing friendship between Japan and the UK.

Since then, the Project has made steady progress, with around 8,000 cherry trees planted all over the UK, far surpassing the original target of 1,000. I recently agreed with Mr Sano and Mr Tsukamoto a renewed goal of planting 10,000 trees.

Today, London Zoo attracts around two million visitors from all over the world every year. I am deeply grateful that the Zoo has welcomed cherry trees from the Project to augment the appeal of its animal inhabitants.

In fact, there is a fascinating bond between Japan and this Zoo. During the first State Visit of then-Their Majesties the Emperor and the Empress of Japan in 1971, they had the pleasure of visiting here. This bond between the Zoo and the Japanese Imperial Family has continued to this day, and His Majesty the Emperor Emeritus is an Honorary Fellow of the Zoological Society of London.

I hope these cherry trees will bloom beautifully in a few years' time and that they will serve as a lasting symbol of the friendship between Japan, the Zoo and the UK, while enchanting visitors for many years to come.

Thank you very much.