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Remarks by H.E. Mr Hiroshi Suzuki,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
on the occasion of the awarding of the Ambassador's Commendation
for Keele University's Collection of Flowering Cherries
on 2nd April 2025

Professor Ormerod,
Dr Emley,
Mr Lees,
Mr Sanders,
Distinguished Guests,

I am delighted to be here to award Japanese Ambassador's Commendation to Keele University's Collection of Flowering Cherries. With over 240 varieties and more than 300 cherry trees, this collection beautifully symbolises the multi-layered relationship between Japan and the UK.

Since the late 1940s, the collection, initially intended as an educational and scientific resource, has grown into a stunning feature of the campus. Because of its significance, it was duly included in the National Plant Collections in 2012.

It is remarkable that this collection has been built over decades by Keele's experts through their continuous efforts to gather sakura cherry trees from Japan. Now it preserves even some species that have become extinct in Japan. Clearly, cherry trees have contributed to the creation of an exceptional bond between Japan and Keele University.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to everyone who has contributed to building this exceptional collection.

On this occasion, I would also like to pay tribute to the Japanese language courses at Keele University led by Kitagawa Sensei.

Indeed, it was thanks to the participation of two Keele students in the Japanese Speech Contest for University Students in 2023, when they made a presentation on sakura in Keele, that the Embassy was able to fully recognise this extraordinary collection and some unsung heroes here today. I am extremely gratified that Japanese Studies at Keele have brought the University and the Japanese Embassy together.

I am convinced that the sakura at Keele will continue to flourish in the decades to come, as a testament to the enduring friendship between Japan and the UK.

Congratulations!