

Remarks by H.E. Mr Hiroshi Suzuki,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at the Japanese British Lawyers Reception 2026,
5th February 2026

Lord Reed,

My Lords, My Ladies,

Eminent Guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my distinct privilege to welcome you all to Japanese British Lawyers Reception this evening.

This annual reception is held for the seventh time.

I am deeply honoured to welcome Lord Reed,

President of the Supreme Court, as the guest of

honour.

We are living at a time of great global change. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a flagrant violation of the core principles of international law: i.e. sovereignty, and territorial integrity, among others. We must stand firmly together to uphold the rule-based international order.

Last Saturday, Prime Minister Starmer visited Japan and held a bilateral summit with Prime Minister Takaichi. I flew back to Tokyo to sit in on that meeting. The two leaders affirmed that Japan and the UK are critical partners in upholding fundamental values : freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

I am pleased to share with you that our cooperation in the legal and judicial fields has been strengthened through various initiatives, such as exchanges between our respective Supreme Courts and the Japan–UK Strategic Dialogue on Law and Justice.

Judge Tomoko Akane, President of the International Criminal Court, was appointed the first Japanese honorary bencher of Middle Temple.

The government of Japan recognised three outstanding persons for their invaluable contribution to strengthening Japan-UK partnership.

Mr Stephen John Pitts was awarded The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette. Professor Barry Rider and Professor Dapo Akande, respectively, were awarded Japanese Foreign Minister's Commendation. This clearly demonstrates the depth and breadth of our cooperation in this field.

I am happy to witness the opening of UK offices by two Japanese major law firms: “Nishimura and Asahi”, and “Nagashima Ohno and Tsunematsu”.

Today, we live in a dramatically changing world. Over many decades, humankind made great progress in establishing rule-based international order. We must not let the world take backsteps and return to the age of the law of the jungles.

John Locke said, “Wherever law ends, tyranny begins.”

We owe it to our future generations—our children and grandchildren - to make sure freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law will endure, and they can live in a world where everyone can pursue their own dreams.

I am firmly convinced that all of you gathered here are pivotal figures in our endeavours to meet this historic challenge.

I sincerely hope that today's reception will contribute to further strengthening our friendship and partnership, and our determination to defend and nurture the rule of law for our future generations.

Thank you very much.