

Remarks by H.E. Mr Hiroshi Suzuki,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
At the Presentation Ceremony of the Foreign
Minister's Commendation
to Mrs Akiko MacDonald, Chairperson of the
Burma Campaign Society
on 19 December 2025

Mrs Akiko MacDonald,
Mr Ernest MacDonald,
Distinguished guests,

Thank you for coming to the Japanese Embassy
this evening.

It is my great pleasure as Ambassador of
Japan to the UK to present the Foreign
Minister's Commendation to Mrs MacDonald,
Chairperson of the Burma Campaign Society.

Mrs MacDonald, whose father served in the Imphal Campaign, has energetically pursued the path of reconciliation between Japan and the UK for many years. In particular, since 2008 she has carried forward the legacy of her predecessor, Mr Masao Hirakubo.

I believe awarding the Commendation this year, which marks the 80th year since the end of the Second World War, holds profound significance.

Mrs Macdonald has undertaken wide-ranging endeavours to promote reconciliation. Truly, ‘Action is eloquence’. Let me share with you just a few examples

In 2013, she arranged a visit to York by a Japanese delegation from Shōnai Town in Yamagata, which culminated in this year's Kohima Memorial Service at York Minster.

In 2019, she travelled to Imphal and Kohima and played a pivotal role in organising commemorative ceremonies to promote reconciliation and reaffirm peace and friendship.

In 2023, she organised a joint Japan-UK memorial service accompanied by British veterans and families of war survivors at the Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery and Yokohama War Cemetery in Hodogaya, in collaboration with the British Embassy in Japan.

This year, on 15th August, I attended the Remembrance Service held in the presence of His Majesty King Charles and Her Majesty Queen Camilla at the National Arboretum.

The final page of the brochure of the ceremony features a photograph of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan, alongside Their Majesties the King and Queen of the United Kingdom taken during the State visit in June last year.

The brochure stated and I quote: ‘The UK-Japan relationship is the strongest it has been in decades, underpinned by the State visit by Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan in June 2024. Since the end of the Second World War, both countries have been united by shared democratic values, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and a deepening defence and security relationship. This enduring friendship has been reaffirmed through regular government and royal engagements. As His Majesty the Emperor of Japan said the State Visit: the UK and Japan are “friends like no other”.

I was deeply moved by the message issued by His Majesty King Charles: ‘In times of war and in times of peace, the greatest weapons of all are not the arms you bear, but the arms you link. That remains a vital lesson for our times.’

Mrs Macdonald has served by truly linking the arms of both our nations.

After the ceremony, I respectfully laid a wreath at the Burma Star Memorial and was honoured to exchange greetings with Lord Mark Slim, the grandson of General Sir William Slim.

Beside every great lady stands a great partner. Mr MacDonald, without your dedicated support, Mrs MacDonald could not have made such an outstanding achievement.

I extend again my congratulations to Mrs Akiko McDonald on receiving the Foreign Minister's Commendation and wish to continue working together for a brighter future.