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Remarks by H.E. Mr Ambassador Hiroshi
Suzuki for the Opening Reception of the
Exhibition “*Hiroshige*” at the British
Museum on 28th April 2025

Dr Cullinan,
Ms Salter,
Distinguished guests,

Good evening.

It gives me great pleasure to be invited to
the grand opening of Hiroshige
Exhibition. Hiroshige is a superstar of the
Ukiyo-e world.

He was born into a family of fire fighters and when he was 12 years old, his father passed away and he had to succeed his father as fire fighter. But he never gave up his dream of becoming a painter, and he managed to “liberate” himself from his family occupation of fire fighter and embarked on his career as a painter.

At first, he asked a master painter to take him in as apprentice, but he was declined because he had enough apprentice. Then he asked another master painter who accepted him, and gave him the name of Hiroshige in the following year. I am so glad that he did not give up his dream of becoming a painter.

His works instantly won great acclaim when he finished them – in fact, one could say they “went viral” – for two reasons.

One was their unique composition and the other was their use of vibrant colours, such as ‘Hiroshige Blue’.

What particularly strikes me is that these two features both had their roots in Europe.

For example, his distinctive style was based on the technique of linear perspective, which came from Europe to Japan in the 18th century.

Also, ‘Hiroshige Blue’ was a refined version of Prussian Blue, which was discovered by an alchemist in Berlin, after which a British naturalist developed a method of producing it at affordable cost.

To me, this is a perfect example of cultural exchange—building bridges between East and West, which stimulated both sides to move up to a higher dimension.

Today, we need to build bridges, not walls. So, thank you to the British Museum for bringing about this important exhibition.

Thank you very much.