

Remarks by H.E. Mr Hiroshi Suzuki, Ambassador of
Japan to the UK, on the occasion of the awarding of the
Foreign Minister's Commendation to Professor Mikael
Adolphson, on 16th October 2026

Professor Adolphson,
Mrs Adolphson,
Ambassador Madden
Distinguished Guests,

Thank you very much for coming to
the Japanese Embassy this evening for this
special occasion. It is my great pleasure to
present the Foreign Minister's
Commendation to Professor Mikael
Adolphson.

Professor Adolphson has spent much
of his career promoting Japan. Tonight we
celebrate his journey, which began with
an unexpected start.

When he was in university, he told his supervisor that he wanted to switch from medieval French history to medieval Japanese history. He was strongly advised against it. His supervisor thought there was no career in medieval Japanese history.

But the Mikael did not let that deter him. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail”.

Professor Adolphson clearly chose his own path, and his distinguished career is the trail he is leaving behind, for which we should all be grateful.

Ever since, he has made great contributions to Japanese Studies, I particularly admire his campaign of “Japan and the World”, which brought about 3 major achievements:

First of all, Professor Adolphson has embedded Japanese studies in wider disciplines and policy. Through his research, he has helped establish interest in Japanese Studies not just for specialists but for students of wider world history as well, bringing many key insights into the mainstream.

Secondly, Professor Adolphson has deepened Japan–Cambridge exchanges and joint research. He has expanded Cambridge’s graduate programme, attracting and training a new generation.

His work has built the institutional foundations of a sustainable future. Through the Japan Global Research Centre and a growing network across government, industry and foundations, he has created new opportunities for people and ideas to come together.

Third, and not in the least, Professor Adolphson has supported scholarships and researches in collaboration with industry partners. Along this journey, Ms Kiyomi Hashimoto of the Dojima Sake Brewery helped Mikael a great deal, and they have worked tirelessly to expand support for Japanese Studies.

Today Japanese studies in many universities are downsizing, and prominent researchers are facing the risks of losing their positions. We need to work together and do our best so that the research, education and human connections built by Professor Adolphson and others can be passed on to the next generation.

Alongside a great man stands a great lady. Mrs Adolphson, without your support, Professor Adolphson could not have made such remarkable achievements.

In closing, I would like to congratulate Professor Adolphson once again on his well-deserved honour. I very much hope that the spirit of “Japan and the World” will continue to flourish at Cambridge, and from Cambridge to across the UK and around the world, for many years to come.

Thank you very much. (End)