

Lord Reed of Allermuir

Remarks at a Reception to celebrate the birthday of Emperor Naruhito

Japan House, London, 7 February 2023

Your Excellency,

On behalf of all your guests, may I express our deep appreciation of your inviting us to this celebration of His Imperial Majesty's birthday. I have read that the Emperor is defined in your country's constitution as the symbol of the State and of the unity of the People. The same can be said of our own King. That is one of the many points of similarity between our two countries.

Our countries also have many important interests in common: economically, as two of the world's leading economies, members of the G7, and island nations dependent on international trade; politically, as two of the world's leading champions of democracy, civil liberties, freedom of speech and the rule of law; and strategically, as fellow members of the United Nations Security Council, with a common interest in deterring international aggression and preserving a rules-based international order.

These common interests, and the amicable relations between our countries, are reflected in our cooperation in relation to security and defence, trade and business, energy and climate change. Recent examples of such cooperation include the UK-Japan Digital Partnership, signed in December, the announcement – also in December - of collaboration between the United Kingdom, Italy and Japan on the development of the next generation of fighter aircraft, the week-long visit of our Minister for the Indo-Pacific to Japan during January, and Prime Minister Kishida's visit to this country, also in January, when the Reciprocal Access Agreement in relation to defence and security was signed.

One area where cooperation has been more limited in the past is my own field, justice and the law. However, the law underpins everything else. Our understanding of justice and of the role of the courts is fundamental to our sense of our country's identity and its traditions. Business and trade depend upon the law and the administration of justice. Even the agreements which I have mentioned are themselves legal instruments. The United Kingdom's position as a world-

leading centre for commercial and international law and dispute resolution also makes the law an area in which we have much that is valuable to share.

With your assistance and support, Your Excellency, the ties between the courts of Japan and the UK are becoming stronger. In 2021, we held the first online meeting between the Supreme Courts of our two countries, and we are planning a further meeting this year. I have also been very generously invited by Chief Justice Tokura to spend time with him and his colleagues in Tokyo later this year, when we can discuss future cooperation. This is an important opportunity to further develop friendly relations and mutual understanding between the judiciaries of the United Kingdom and Japan.

Returning to our Royal families, they too can play a role in strengthening the friendship between our countries. Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress are no strangers to this country. I am pleased to say, as the High Steward of Oxford University, that both their Majesties studied there: the Empress at my own college. Her father, of course, as well as being a former President of the International Court of Justice, is also a former professor of international law at both Oxford and Cambridge. Last year their Majesties made their first visit to this country since the Emperor's accession, when they attended the funeral of our late Queen, who had done so much to strengthen the relationship between the royal families of the United Kingdom and Japan over the course of her long life.

So, I have a wish for His Imperial Majesty. In Japanese, I think it is otanjoubi omedetou gozaimasu; in English, Happy Birthday.