

**Date: 30 September 2022**

**Venue: 'Oakfield', Ambassador Kitano's Official Residence**

Ms Karen Ruddock, Distinguished Guests, good evening,

Welcome to this happy occasion honouring our valued friend and colleague Ms Karen Ruddock for the award of Japan's Foreign Minister's Commendation for her outstanding contribution to the promotion of Japanese language education in Ireland.

Needless to say, I don't have to explain to you who Karen is, as you all know her well both personally and professionally. Nevertheless, I would like to take a moment to touch upon just some of her achievements.

Karen is a modest but highly able leader in the field of foreign language education in Ireland. As National Coordinator of Post-Primary Languages Ireland from 2009 and currently as Director from 2019, Karen has played a central role in the promotion of foreign language education at second-level in Ireland.

At this point, I would like to focus on her great contribution to Japanese language education, which has steadily expanded since it was offered by PPLI as the first non-European language in second-level schools in 2001. As many people here know, according to the Japan Foundation's 2018 Survey on Japanese-Language Education Abroad, Ireland is in the top position with the highest number of learners of Japanese per 100,000 population in Western Europe. I have no doubt that Karen's leadership and commitment have had a large part to play in this great achievement.

I would like to touch upon the Joint Statement which Taoiseach Micheál Martin issued with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida when he visited Japan this July. The strengthening of Japanese language education is one of the important items in this document. We look forward to working

with Karen and everyone engaged in Japanese language education towards the further promotion of Japanese language in Ireland.

As well as her work in her professional capacity, Karen has regularly devoted her free time to helping to promote Japanese language education. For example, as a past Chairperson of the Japanese Language Teachers of Ireland, and by assisting the Embassy with the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme activities on countless occasions.

With her tireless efforts to ensure that Japanese language education in Ireland goes from strength to strength, Karen is a most deserving recipient of the Foreign Minister's Commendation and a true friend of Japan. I would like to invite you all to join me now in congratulating Karen on this award.

Congratulations, Karen