

**Remarks by H.E. Mr MARUYAMA Norio, Ambassador of Japan to Ireland, for the
Reception to Celebrate the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan
at the Ambassador's Residence on 28 February 2023**

Ceann Comhairle
Attorney General
Ministers
Members of the Oireachtas
Excellencies, Colleague Ambassadors
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Today I am honoured and delighted to have you here at the Residence of the Ambassador of Japan to celebrate the 63rd birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan.

Japan and Ireland enjoy a long tradition of friendly relations. In 2017, we celebrated the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between our two countries. But if we think about the relationship between our people, it dates back to more than 150 years ago. At that time, Japan had just opened the country and Irish people were among those foreign people who made contributions to Japanese society in a variety of fields.

Since then, culture and economy has connected our people. Irish arts, music, dance and literature continue to fascinate Japanese people, including the younger generation. Japanese businesses have been investing in Ireland since the 1980s. The total volume of our trade is more than 7 billion Euro. In addition to this, recently, we discovered together that we also have a common passion, rugby. The 2019 Rugby World Cup hosted in Japan brought our peoples even closer.

After the unfortunate interruption due to Covid-19, our relations regained their dynamism with the visit of the Taoiseach last year. The Joint Statement issued on this occasion paves the way for our further collaboration in a wide range of areas, including international financing services, life sciences and renewable energy, just to mention a few. In February this year, we had the honour to welcome to Japan the Ceann Comhairle and Members of the Oireachtas.

Ceann Comhairle

On this occasion, along with your delegation, you visited Hiroshima. This visit has great significance because this year Japan holds the Presidency of the G7 and in May, we will host the G7 Summit in Hiroshima.

Ceann Comhairle

Last week, when you invited us, the Heads of Mission of the Diplomatic Corps, at the Dáil Chamber to observe a minute of silence for the victims of Ukraine, in your introductory remarks, you mentioned your visit to Hiroshima. I was moved when you referred to the conversation you had with one of the victims and I was encouraged when you strongly said, in the context of what is happening now in Ukraine, that this tragedy should never happen again

On the occasion of the one year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a powerful message was delivered by the leader of the G7. And Japan announced its additional support to the people of Ukraine, amounting to 5.5 billion US dollars. At the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May this year, we will demonstrate strongly the G7's determination to firmly reject any unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force, and to uphold the international order based on the rule of law.

From this January, Japan is a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Ireland made a remarkable contribution to the UN Security Council these last 2 years. Ireland's experiences are valuable for us to fulfill our responsibilities.

With the Global Ireland Strategy, we feel that Ireland is getting ever closer to our region, including the Indo-Pacific. Japan wishes to address with Ireland various challenges faced by the international community to uphold the rule of law all over the world. Talking about the Global Ireland Strategy, I would like to use this opportunity to say how we appreciate the decision of Ireland to open Ireland House in Tokyo. I would like to say "Go raibh míle maith agat".

Ceann Comhairle
Attorney General

Before closing my remarks, I have some announcements about upcoming Japanese events in Ireland. I talked about our common passion, rugby. Next month, the U19 national team of Japan will visit Ireland. They will play against the team of Trinity College Dublin and others during their stay.

At the end of March, a famous Japanese film director will visit Ireland on the occasion of the East Asian Film Festival and this will be followed in April by the Japanese Film Festival that will take place in seven cities around Ireland: Dublin, Cork, Galway, Waterford, Sligo, Limerick and Dundalk. I am planning to visit those cities to promote our film festival.

The last announcement is related to Irish dancing. I mentioned earlier that the

Japanese people, including the younger generation, are fascinated by Irish arts, music and dance. I would like to introduce two young Japanese sisters who are fascinated by Irish dancing and we are fascinated through them by Irish dancing. They are living in Dublin. They have qualified as members of the Ireland National Team for the 2023 World Irish Dancing Championship that will take place in April in Montreal.

Allow me to introduce Ayano Tanaka and Mizuki Tanaka.

A video of their performance will be displayed during the evening.

Before proceeding to the toast, I would like to thank the musicians who performed our national anthem so remarkably. The Japanese instrument shakuhachi was played by Mr Philip Horan, and this was accompanied by the piano performed by Mr Charles Marshall. They deserve once again a big round of applause.

Now, I would like to propose a toast to His Majesty's continued good health, to His Excellency the President of Ireland's continued good health, to the friendship between Japan and Ireland, as well as the happiness and prosperity of everyone present here this evening.

Kanpai

Sláinte!