

Speech: Opening remarks from the Prime Minister in Japan

Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan

I'd like to once again welcome Prime Minister May on her very first visit to Japan. When I visited the United Kingdom in April of this year, she gave me a special welcome by inviting me to the Chequers. As I return a favour, I had the pleasure to invite Prime Minister May to Kyoto and it was a delight that we were able to enjoy tea in a very traditional Omotesenke. And of course, at the Kyoto State Guest House, it's a very traditionally Japanese architect, unlike here at the Akasaka Guest State House, but we did have a very candid and deep conversation together over dinner.

And in that sense, I very much was delighted that we were able to have a very candid conversation about the regional issues together. At a time of change and unpredictability, I put great and ever more importance with the United Kingdom as a global strategic partner that shares fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

I also would like to offer my respect to Prime Minister May's leadership as she steers her country towards the departure from the European Union. Taking the opportunity of, Theresa, your visit to Japan, I hope to make it a huge step forward to elevate our relationship to a new level and would like to work hand in hand with you to robustly develop our bilateral ties between Japan and the United Kingdom.

Theresa May, UK Prime Minister

Thank you, thank you very much, and I am delighted to be able to be here in Japan, and I would like to thank you for the welcome that you have given me. And I was particularly pleased on, as you say, my first visit to Japan, to be able to sample some traditional Japanese culture, as well as some very productive meetings.

As you say, this is an important time for the United Kingdom as we are preparing and negotiating for our exit from the European Union. And as we do so, we are looking to enhance our partnerships, our ties and our links with countries around the world with whom we have had good longstanding relationships, but with whom we can build further cooperation in the future, and Japan is a key country for the United Kingdom. And we already have good cooperation and partnerships in investment between our two countries, with – between businesses, and the Business Forum today was a very good opportunity for further links to be made.

And there will be further work for us to do on enhancing our trade relationship, but also in security and defence, as we both see the same challenges and threats around the world. And as two nations, island nations, that believe in the rule of law, in the rules-based international order, and

have the same values, I believe it is important that we work together. And I look forward to our further discussions.