

Farewell Message from Tsuyoshi Takahashi

A month has already passed since I left the Japan Foundation, London at the end of August 2013. Time has flown by!



During my two years in London, I had the honor to meet so many new friends with shared values and who sought the same goals through cultural activities. I will cherish the time I spent working with you in deepening mutual and intercultural understanding between Japan and the UK/Europe.

I arrived in London around six months after March 11, 2011. I was deeply impressed by the sympathy extended by the people in the UK to those who were affected by the disasters in Tohoku. I am writing this message on board a ferry which is sailing off the Sanriku Coast, Tohoku. I truly believe that it is our responsibility to continue to share our experiences and what we have learned through the disasters with those foreign friends who are concerned about Tohoku.

My term at the Japan Foundation, London was full of rich experiences. The Olympic and Paralympic Games in London and the Department of Education's plan to reform the National Curriculum for primary and secondary schools were just two examples of hugely important events during these two years. I feel that by learning from the successes of London 2012, Tokyo will be able to contribute much to the world at the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics, and I hope many pupils in England will learn Japanese when the new curriculum starts in 2014. Languages are not only a tool for communication, but also cultures themselves. Through learning Japanese, I hope many pupils will discover the joys of encountering different cultures.

Although my time in the UK was rather short, I am pleased to have made a personal contribution to strengthening and deepening the activities of the Japan Foundation, London. I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the kind support you have extended to me and the Japan Foundation.

While we have made progress over the last two years, many challenges still lie ahead. I am sure that my experienced and capable successor Mr. Kenichi Yanagisawa will do an excellent job as the new Regional Director for Europe and the Director-General for the UK, and I hope that the same support and kindness will be extended to him as was shown to me.

From October, I will be working for a private sector company in Tokyo. While cultural activities are no longer my official duties, as an old boy of the Japan Foundation and a friend of the UK and Europe, I will continue to contribute toward the facilitation of international mutual understanding at the grassroots level.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you once again for your support and to wish you all the best for the future.

Tsuyoshi Takahashi
Former Regional Director for Europe/Director-General to the UK
The Japan Foundation

Message from Kenichi Yanagisawa, newly appointed Director General of the Japan Foundation, London Office.

Hello, I am Kenichi Yanagisawa, the new Director-General of the Japan Foundation, London Office.

Although I have been engaged in cultural exchange between Europe and Japan for much of my career at the Japan Foundation, this is my first assignment to the UK. I must say I am truly delighted to finally be here and I am greatly looking forward to strengthening existing links and pursuing new channels of exchange between the UK and Japan.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to the people of the UK for your continued support since the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. This has been a constant source of inspiration for us all. It is true to say that the recovery efforts have been slow at times, but progress is being made in Tohoku. The Japan Foundation is fully committed to supporting the recovery process as best we can and we are organising a number of events related to the disaster in the coming months which I urge you to keep an eye out for.

Upon assuming my role last month I was very pleased to learn of the Department of Education's plan to reform the National Curriculum for primary and secondary schools. As part of this plan, from September 2014 it will be compulsory for all maintained primary schools in England to teach at least one foreign language from Key Stage 2. We hope that many schools in England choose to teach Japanese! As a specialised agency for Japanese language and culture, we are supporting schools and teachers by offering Japanese "taster" sessions which provide teachers with indispensable resources to start up Japanese language

courses. Additionally, we are organising a cooperative system through which we can give advice and provide consultation services to teachers and schools. We would encourage any primary schools that are considering teaching Japanese from next year to contact us to find out more about the support we offer.

A further piece of recent news that I am sure you noticed was the announcement that the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be held in Tokyo. People in Japan were very impressed by the wonderful London Olympics of 2012 and we hope the 2020 Tokyo Olympics will be equally successful as a sporting and cultural spectacle. It is my dream to welcome as many guests as possible from the UK to Tokyo in 2020, not only Olympic athletes but also visitors and friends. Perhaps we will witness British teenagers who speak Japanese showing their parents around Tokyo and enjoying it to the fullest!

As well as acting as Director-General of the Japan Foundation London Office, I have also been appointed Regional Director for Europe. Shortly after the fall of the Berlin wall, I was posted to Germany where I worked for four years during what was a rather chaotic time following the collapse of the former DDR. Then, in the late nineties I worked exclusively on the planning and foundation of *Maison de la Culture Japon a Paris*, Japan's largest cultural facility abroad. I hope to utilize this experience of working on the continent and, as well as promoting exchange between the UK and Japan, I also look forward to opportunities to find common interest with people across Europe as a whole.

I hope to be able to meet many of you at our events and on other occasions and I hope that I can continue to count on the same co-operation and understanding shown to my predecessor, Mr Tsuyoshi Takahashi. The Japan Foundation London will try to be as open as possible for all who may wish to contribute further to cultural exchange with Japan, and I will always welcome your suggestions or advice whenever you may wish to get in contact with me.

Kenichi Yanagisawa
Regional Director for Europe/Director-General to the UK
The Japan Foundation