As a representative for the organisations hosting this event, it is a great honour and pleasure for me to be able to commemorate with you today the 30th anniversary and successes of the JET Programme in the presence of Their Imperial Highnesses Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako.

Following earlier programmes such as the ‘American English Teacher’s Consultant Assistant (MEF: Monbusho English Fellow) Programme’, which began in 1977, the JET Programme was launched in 1987, as an attempt to promote international exchange not just in schools, but in communities as well.

This year marks the 30-year milestone of the programme. The JET Programme, with the cooperation of those in attendance here today and many others from various fields, has consistently made accomplishments on multiple fronts, from classrooms to local communities.

In schools, for example, JET participants assist in foreign language instruction, cooperating with Japanese instructors throughout Japan including on outlying islands, and contributing greatly to the development of foreign language education. They also help promote internationalisation in their local communities by taking part in local events.

Currently our Ministry is considering revising the Courses of Study on foreign language education, as Japan prepares to host the 2019 Rugby World Cup and the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. Under the revised Courses of Study, from 2020, foreign language education will begin in the third grade of elementary school. This will mean that JET Programme participants will play an even larger role than before.

Our Ministry, with the further support of all involved, will be doing everything we can to promote the further development of the JET Programme.

In closing, I would like to ask all of you in attendance today for your continued your support and cooperation. Thank you very much.