It gives me great pleasure to be able to hold the JET Programme 30th Anniversary ceremony in the presence of Their Imperial Highnesses the Crown Prince and Crown Princess. I would like to offer my sincere appreciation to all of those involved in the JET Programme and to those of you in attendance here today.

Since the programme began in 1987, around 65,000 people from 65 countries have taken part. JET Programme participants, arriving with a strong interest in Japan, continue to play active roles on many different fronts even after returning to their home countries. Some become legislators, work in think tanks, or teach at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels; others become public servants or work in the media, join corporations, including Japanese companies, are active in other organisations, or work as artists or practitioners of Japanese cultural pursuits.

Many former JET participants join voluntary JET Alumni Association (JETAA) chapters after returning to their home countries, and continue to share their love and knowledge of Japanese culture. One former JET participant who was placed in Nagano Prefecture, after joining the JETAA Florida chapter, began organising the Tampa Natsu Matsuri, a summer festival that has become an annual event. After the Great East Japan Earthquake, JET alumni who had worked in prefectures such as Miyagi and Shiga, went to the Tohoku region to make a documentary film, called Tohoku Tomo, to maintain awareness of the disaster-affected areas in Japan. The film was shown throughout North America.

Today there are JETAA chapters in 16 countries with more than 28,000 members. Many JETAA members volunteer to take part in JET recruiting and PR activities, to raise interest among potential applicants. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs strives to continue promoting the JET Programme as a way to further understanding of Japan in other countries.

In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation once again to everyone involved in this programme. Thank you very much.