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Witnesses: HE Foo Chi Hsia and HE Keiichi Hayashi

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Members present

Lord Teverson (Chairman)
 Lord Addington
 Baroness Browning
 Viscount Hanworth
 Lord Hannay of Chiswick
 Lord Moynihan
 Lord Oxburgh
 Lord Soley
 Lord Tugendhat

Examination of Witnesses

HE Foo Chi Hsia, High Commissioner for Singapore to the United Kingdom, and **HE Keiichi Hayashi**, Ambassador of Japan to the United Kingdom

Q302 The Chairman: Your Excellencies, High Commissioner and Ambassador, can I welcome you to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Arctic? We are very pleased that you could join us this morning for this evidence session, which is one of the last of our evidence sessions that we are taking as part of this report. I hope you have had a copy of all of the Committee Members' interests so that you are aware of those. Perhaps I could ask you to briefly introduce yourselves. We are being broadcast live on this evidence session. We will then continue the questions after that. Perhaps, High Commissioner, I could ask you to go first and then ask you, Ambassador.

Foo Chi Hsia: Sure, it would be my pleasure. Good morning everyone. My name is Foo Chi Hsia. Hsia is my first name, Foo is my family name. I have been the High Commissioner to the UK since September this year. As a result of our Arctic interests, I am also concurrently accredited to Iceland as the Ambassador to Iceland and to Ireland.

The Chairman: Thank you. Ambassador, would you introduce yourself?

Keiichi Hayashi: Thank you, my Lord Chairman. My name is Keiichi Hayashi. I am the Japanese Ambassador to the UK. I am not accredited to any other country. I have not served in the Arctic yet, but I did serve among the Arctic countries in the US and Washington. I have been Ambassador here for just about four years now. Thank you very much.

The Chairman: Ambassador, do you wish to make a few points as part of question one, perhaps? Let me ask that and then we can carry on. To begin with, what are the interests and priorities of Japan and Singapore in the Arctic? Has your level of interest in the Arctic region increased in recent years? If so, why? Obviously, this is within the context of both your nations being permanent observers to the Arctic Council now. Ambassador, do you wish to start?

Keiichi Hayashi: If I may, yes; thank you, my Lord Chairman. In our view, global warming is bringing about environmental changes in the Arctic, such as the melting of sea ice, permafrost, ice sheets and glaciers. This not only presents the international community with economic opportunities, such as the possible availability of the Arctic sea route and better access to natural resources like gas and oil, but has an effect on the vulnerable natural environment as well. Japan recognises that such opportunities and challenges, if I may say so, could affect not only the Arctic but the entire globe. That is why Japan believes that it is necessary to tackle these interests and challenges based upon a wide range of international co-operation, while respecting the centrality of regional states and Arctic-indigenous peoples.

There are two major tasks for the international community to tackle such challenges and make the most of emerging opportunities. The first is to grasp, based on scientific research, what is going on in the Arctic and its impact on the global environment in order to precisely predict further changes and take necessary measures to tackle and perhaps minimise negative impact. The second is to reach a common understanding on appropriate manners of economic use of the Arctic. Let me stop here.

The Chairman: Thank you. High Commissioner, would you like to comment?

Foo Chi Hsia: Yes, my Lord Chairman. It would not surprise you that our interests are similar to Japan's and those of other observers of the Arctic Council on three levels. One is the rising sea level, two is the new sea routes that will have implications on all of us, and three is the development and implementation of international law.

As you will all know, Singapore is a small low-lying island. It is half the size of London at just over 700 square kilometres. Despite the fact that we are half way around the globe from the Arctic, at the equator, we are especially vulnerable to rising sea levels as a result of the melting Arctic ice. Much of Singapore lies only about 50 metres above mean sea level and about 30% lies less than five metres above. We have obviously noticed that the mean sea

level in the Straits of Singapore has been increasing by about three millimetres per year over the last 15 years and could rise up to 0.65 metres by 2100. It is therefore almost existential for us to have access to scientific studies on any dramatic changes in the rising sea level in order for us to put the necessary adaptation measures in place on time.

The opening of sea passages will of course have an impact on Singapore's shipping and maritime interests, but we see it both as a challenge and, as the Japanese Ambassador has mentioned, equally as an opportunity. With the shortened sea between northern Europe and north-east Asia, there are potential implications for Singapore's status as the maritime sea hub along the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. We think that the shipping conditions in the Arctic will probably remain difficult for the foreseeable future, but of course this could change quickly and, again, we would like to pre-position ourselves, should there be any such changes. However, there are also opportunities for us. The improved access, as well as access to natural resources in the region, has increased economic opportunities. As a result, we think that some of our companies will be able to provide supporting services.

Finally, it is important to make clear that clearly we have no territorial or resource claims in the Arctic region, but we do hope that these claims will be resolved peacefully in accordance with international law. Upholding the freedom of navigation as prescribed under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea is paramount to Singapore, and measures taken by Arctic states to regulate shipping and other maritime activities for navigational safety and environmental protection must therefore be consistent with UNCLOS and all other aspects of international law. That is where Singapore's interests really lie.

Q303 The Chairman: Thank you. I apologise: we seem to have the builders in. We will see if we can fix that. If I could just follow up briefly on a couple of issues, Ambassador, one of the things we have come to learn is, of the Asian nations, Japan has a long track record in Antarctic research. I wondered how relevant that was to your work in the Arctic for the future and whether you saw that as an important track record or that it was helpful to have both of those aspects.

Perhaps I could also ask both of you another question. One of the characteristics of the new intake of permanent observers was very much the Asian interest. I am interested to know whether you think there is a competitive race in Arctic interests from the Pacific and from Asia at the moment. Is that a factor?

Keiichi Hayashi: Thank you, my Lord Chairman. Japan was allowed to be an observer on the Arctic Council only recently, but Japan's involvement or experience in both Arctic and Antarctic affairs is very long. We informally set up a section or division to deal with what we call polar affairs, both Antarctic and Arctic, more than 50 years ago. Our primary interest, however, was more observatory, exploratory and scientific. We kept on sending our Antarctic missions for a long time. For the Arctic, probably because of the lack of a continent there, our activities remain more or less observations via satellite or sending some observation missions occasionally. However, the interest in the Antarctic certainly overlaps with our interest in the Arctic, but now our interest in the Arctic has assumed a new aspect of economic interest and much more pressing environmental concerns.

That is why back in 2009 we applied for observer status on the Arctic Council. The economic interest I briefly mentioned in the beginning covers this possibly shortened northern sea route, which should cut the distance between Japan and, say, a major port in Europe like Hamburg or Rotterdam by 40%. That would offer economic benefit first of all, but it would diversify our maritime routes, because we are heavily dependent on the Indian Ocean, the Strait of Malacca and the Philippine sea lanes. Of course, that has been recently plagued by piracy as well. In that context, an alternative route would give us much more leeway, and that is very welcome. Of course, the global concern with the environment is something else. Japan's status as a global economic power necessitates that Japan is heavily involved in global environmental protection, so we are very happy to provide whatever expertise we have accumulated over our more than 50 years experience in observation and exploration.

On the second point that you raise, my Lord Chairman, I think my Singaporean colleague would certainly be happy to point out the frequent dialogue that we hold with Asian countries, including Singapore. A recent example is the ministerial conference that we held on a trilateral basis with Japan, China and Korea in August this year, just a few months ago. There was a ministerial conference on transport and logistics, which was attended by the three relevant Ministers from Japan, China and Korea. They indicated their interest in Arctic matters and they agreed in a joint statement that the three countries will make efforts for mutual co-operation on the northern sea route through exchanging information. There is awareness of the need for co-operation.

The Chairman: That is very useful. Thank you.

Foo Chi Hsia: As the newest permanent observer on the Arctic Council, Singapore is obviously the new kid on the block. We are just beginning to develop our own expertise and capacity on Arctic issues, including research activities. I could briefly talk about some of the new things that we are starting, including a Centre for Offshore Research and Engineering at the National University of Singapore, which is studying the pattern of the break-up of sea ice and how it affects offshore structures. Given that we are relatively new at this, the Government are also partnering with the same university, the National University of Singapore, to set up an Arctic affairs programme. This includes a study by the NUS Centre for Maritime Studies on trans-Arctic shipping routes. We have also provided research fellowships on Arctic legal issues under the NUS Centre for International Law. Under this fellowship programme, we have appointed a former legal adviser from the US Department of State, Captain Ashley Roach, as a research fellow in order to build up our own knowledge on international law pertaining to the Arctic.

Our companies are also developing their own Arctic capabilities through industrial research activities. For example, Keppel is a company that is also working with the National University of Singapore Corporate Laboratory, which was set up in collaboration with the National Research Foundation, which I think Lord Oxburgh will be very familiar with, to undertake research in many areas, including Arctic technology and offshore industry. At this point in time, we have not collaborated with other states on Arctic research, whether Asian or otherwise, but we are certainly looking forward to the opportunity to work with others in order to advance Arctic interests.

The growth in interest by Asian states that you were asking about is a natural reaction to the global implications of developments in the Arctic. We recognise that there seems to be a proliferation of activities, but it is inevitable when the interest is so great. At this stage, the more activities the better. Bringing knowledge and awareness to Asia is important, given the broader implications, so that we can all understand the issues better and develop our response to it better as well. Thank you very much.

Lord Soley: High Commissioner, you said, if I heard you right, that some of the research that is being done was on the effect of the break-up of ice on offshore installations. Is that sort of research being done because of the interests of the insurance companies or because of the interest that you might have as companies to start doing that sort of work?

Foo Chi Hsia: It would be a bit of both. Given that many of our companies include port companies as well as companies that build offshore oil rigs and other platforms, we would want to be able to know the implications of building ports and other structures over sea ice as opposed to the normal environment that we are more familiar with.

Lord Soley: Insurance is a key factor for you, is it not?

Foo Chi Hsia: It could be, yes.

Q304 Lord Tugendhat: High Commissioner, I listened very carefully to what you said, and you were very frank about the difficulties for Singapore about the Arctic route, but could I press you a little further? The whole *raison d'être* of Singapore, the reason it was established where it is, was because it is astride the main sea route from Asia to Europe. It would seem to me that once the technical difficulties are solved, the northern sea route is really going to be something in the nature of a commercial catastrophe for Singapore. It will mean that instead of having 100% of the traffic between Europe and Asia, you will have a viable competitor. You will no doubt maintain a substantial percentage, but just as Singapore airport has suffered from the rise of Dubai, so Singapore as an entrepôt will suffer from the rise of the northern sea route.

The Chairman: Before you answer that, that is part of the question that Viscount Hanworth is going to ask.

Viscount Hanworth: My question has been totally pre-empted, in fact.

Lord Tugendhat: I am so sorry.

Viscount Hanworth: No, not at all. There is no need for an apology.

The Chairman: Lord Hanworth, is there something you would like to add to that?

Viscount Hanworth: We need to know the consciousness of the two nations of these economic potentials. What is being done to prepare for them? Is there an ongoing debate about some of the threat that Lord Tugendhat has mentioned? That was very much the question I was going to ask, but I will ask something else subsequently.

The Chairman: High Commissioner, would you like to start on that? Then we can hear from you, Ambassador.

Foo Chi Hsia: Perhaps it is useful to start by explaining the context of the maritime industry in Singapore. Certainly it started off as an important sea route; you will be more than familiar with our history. The maritime sector continues to contribute about 7% of Singapore's GDP. It is significant, but it is not an overwhelming part of our GDP. It employs

150,000 people, and we are home to more than 5,000 maritime-related establishments. Ports and shipping are part of those establishments, but many other maritime-related establishments have since been set up in Singapore as well.

It is true that Singapore is located along the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, through which each year we ship half of the world's annual supply of crude oil. Singapore receives 120,000 vessels and ships about one-seventh of the world's shipping containers a year. We are also the top bunkering port in the world for bunker sales. The possibility of a diversion of sea routes would of course have implications for Singapore but with the faster growth in trade among Asian economies, which account for 40% of the world's shipping tonnage, we believe Singapore will remain well placed to leverage these growth opportunities, including as an international maritime centre beyond shipping and port-related activities, in other maritime-related services and offshore and marine-engineering activities, which is why I spoke earlier about how it is both a challenge for Singapore as well as an opportunity.

As one of the world's premier hub ports, Singapore can develop in the related service industries that we are also developing. Some of our expertise, including on port management, operations and regulation, can be adapted for the Arctic. In that sense, developments in the Arctic could present opportunities for us as well as the development of what we call our external economy beyond the direct possible implications to our internal domestic economy, which, again, as I mentioned, could be unlikely in the short term.

Viscount Hanworth: I take it, then, that you think there is an assured maritime future for Singapore, regardless of what happens on the northern sea route, which may not be imminent. There is a very different tack that I want to pursue. It is simply a point of clarification. I have a document here that says the direct threat of melting of the sea ice to the city state is considerable, given that it is just 163 metres above sea level. That is a very confusing statement. It is Bukit Timah that is 163 metres above sea level, is it not?

Foo Chi Hsia: That is right, yes.

Viscount Hanworth: You mentioned that the preponderance of the land mass is only 15 metres.

Foo Chi Hsia: That is right.

Viscount Hanworth: In my perception, which is a rather recent one, there is a lot of low-lying ground in Singapore that would be threatened by a one-metre rise. Do you have

any handle on those scenarios of rising sea level and the implications it would have for the land mass?

Foo Chi Hsia: Yes, absolutely. As I mentioned earlier, much of Singapore lies 15 metres above the mean sea level.

Viscount Hanworth: Much lies a lot lower as well.

Foo Chi Hsia: Yes, exactly—30% lies less than five metres above mean sea level. We have been able to put a long-term adaptation strategy in place. That includes the possibility of doing land reclamation above and beyond our normal level above sea level, so we are increasingly raising and elevating the sea level of Singapore. We are looking at different technologies, including floating platforms, such that it is not dependent on the sea level; you are going to operate on a floating platform regardless of the sea level. Many of our interests in the Arctic include the fact that when we look at the melting ice caps, theoretically the water flows around the globe, but due to magnetic fields and other factors there is a higher rise in sea level for places closest to the equator. Precisely for those reasons, we want to be able to have the advance-warning mechanism in order to put in place the adaptation measures as early and effectively as we can.

Viscount Hanworth: The matter is very much in consideration at the moment. I ought to ask the Ambassador something about the prospects of the northern sea route for Japan, because it would be a rather different scenario from the one that affects the prospects of Singapore.

Keiichi Hayashi: Thank you. As I said in the beginning, this possible northern sea route would certainly be a welcome development only from the perspective of the diversification of our transport routes. However, at the same time, we are very much concerned about the environmental impact. First of all, the northern sea route is not available throughout the year. It may be increasingly available because of the melting of ice and glaciers and so on. Whether that itself is a welcome development or not is a big question.

Even if it becomes available, we must also be very aware that the ecological and environmental system in the Arctic is very vulnerable, and because of the nature of the Arctic it takes decades to restore once damage is done by, for instance, collision or grounding accidents. In our view, in considering this option it is extremely important that we should make sure that the activities in the Arctic area, including shipping, are done safely and in a way that should not impose heavy strain on the vulnerable environment. In that

context, Japan would like to continue to do such protected activities through Japan's scientific expertise and technologies that have been accumulated over half a century.

May I just mention some more practical aspects? For the trans-Arctic route to be established as a viable, practical new sea route, there are a number of challenges to be overcome in terms of the measures and information necessary to ensure safe navigation and security. There is also an issue related to security in how Russian domestic regulations will be implemented in relation to vessels operating there.

The Chairman: Do you have a concern about that, Ambassador? Will Russia be over-onerous or go beyond their remit under international law?

Keiichi Hayashi: As the High Commissioner from Singapore briefly mentioned, whatever the regulations are, they will have to be in accordance with international law, because we have one specific article under UNCLOS in relation to that whole region. However, the interpretation of this particular provision is not so unequivocal yet, so there is room for different interpretations on one hand. Also, the actual meaning and implementation of Russian regulations are not so clear yet.

Viscount Hanworth: I really wanted to discover the alacrity with which Japanese industry is reacting to an imagined economic prospect, but I suppose this is so imponderable we cannot at this stage say anything.

The Chairman: Perhaps, Viscount, I could take a couple of brief supplementaries. If we could make questions and answers quite short, that would be quite useful at this stage.

Q305 Lord Moynihan: Both your Governments have clearly done a lot of work on this. The absolutely key issue for us is to receive an appreciation on the timing of when you believe the northern sea route will be commercially feasible. You have given us a whole variety of different reasons as to the difficulties: it is only navigable during the summer; the Russian regulatory framework; the requirement of icebreaking capability, which clearly is going to add to shipping companies' fuel costs; and safety risks, as search and rescue capacity is not in place on the northern sea route. Are we talking, in your view, about five, 10, 50 or 100 years ahead before this becomes commercially feasible? Could you give us a figure for when you believe a commercially feasible sea route will exist?

Keiichi Hayashi: I wish I could, but I do not have any specific figure.

Lord Moynihan: Do you have an idea? Are we talking about 20, 60 or 100 years?

Keiichi Hayashi: My Lord, on the one hand we are trying really hard to protect the Arctic environment in trying to stop global warming. If successful, that should have a negative impact on the early availability of the sea route, so we are in a rather ambivalent position here. For the time being, the availability of the sea route is considered from a business perspective to be very limited. Even if the Russian regulations were clarified, it would not instantly give us an opportunity to make use of the sea route.

Of course, for instance, in the context of the development of the well known Yamal Peninsula project, there are a number of vessels that have to be tracking this sea route for the purpose of the project. When the project is completed, I think the liquefied natural gas will have to be transported through this route, and it may become more frequently used, but it does not mean that we will have this Asia-Europe route instantly available. I am sorry that I cannot give you specific figures, but that is where we stand now.

Foo Chi Hsia: I completely share the view of the Japanese Ambassador. That is precisely why we sought observership in the Arctic Council: to get more information and do better studies to plan for an eventuality that might be more medium term than short term.

Lord Moynihan: What is the difference between short term and medium term in this context?

Foo Chi Hsia: Short term would be within, perhaps, one term of Government.

The Chairman: Touché. That is a very good answer. We all understand that answer. That is a really good question by Lord Moynihan. Basically, what you are really both saying to the Committee is that this is almost impossible to determine and that you cannot plan for it. Are you saying that? I do not know. Is that what comes over?

Foo Chi Hsia: We are constantly planning for all scenarios, which is probably the best thing to do for a country like Singapore.

Keiichi Hayashi: Yes, from that perspective we will continue to make all possible preparations for the eventuality of the route being available. In the meantime, we certainly would like to make efforts to grasp what really is going on in the Arctic. That is the reason why we wanted to be part of the Arctic Council.

The Chairman: Lord Addington, you had a brief supplementary.

Lord Addington: It might even be a point of clarification now. When I was the Committee's representative in Reykjavik at the recent conference up there, we heard suggested by one of your near neighbours' major shipbuilders, Daewoo, that they might want to toughen up

ships to go and try the northern sea route by itself. I take it that there would be no great enthusiasm for building specific freight carriers to be able to try this by themselves, because it does seem to be slightly high risk, very expensive and getting into insurance trouble. That sort of attitude would be something that you would not have a good attitude towards.

The Chairman: A quick comment would be useful.

Keiichi Hayashi: It would be dependent primarily on commercial considerations, and the Government are not in a position to encourage the companies to take risks, because there are so many unknown factors at the moment.

Foo Chi Hsia: Likewise, there is no reason Singapore should be doing anything like that.

Q306 Lord Oxburgh: One of the considerations, of course, during the economic development of the Arctic is the effect on indigenous peoples. You both have countries situated quite a long way from that. I wonder whether either of you are able to make any comment on the effect of management of economic development on the indigenous peoples.

The Chairman: You have the wrong question. I am sorry. Lord Oxburgh, do you want to rephrase that?

Lord Oxburgh: My papers seem to have different questions. Can we talk a little about your research activities in the Arctic and how you see investment in Arctic research and, indeed, in co-ordination?

The Chairman: Any issues that are around the indigenous-people side that you get involved in, in terms of observer status, would also be useful for us.

Keiichi Hayashi: In the initial statement, I mentioned that Japan feels that it is necessary to tackle these challenges while respecting the centrality of regional states and Arctic-indigenous peoples. That is already incorporated into the central tier of the Arctic Council, and we respect that element. When I talked about the challenge to make the most of emerging opportunities, that certainly includes the exploitation of natural resources in the area. We are conscious and aware that that would affect the lives of indigenous peoples, and we certainly want to respect their life pattern.

Foo Chi Hsia: From Singapore's perspective, we fully recognise that Arctic states and the people who live in the Arctic are, in fact, the primary stalwarts of the Arctic region, and this is why we are quite actively working with indigenous communities to exchange experiences on how to adapt to change. For example, we have invited representatives of the

Arctic Council permanent participants to visit Singapore for customised study visits each year to exchange experiences of common areas of interest and co-operation. In fact, the most recent visit took place earlier this month, where people from the Aleut International Association, the Arctic Athabaskan Council, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North and the Sami Council came to Singapore to exchange views with our officials on various aspects of social and economic development, including heritage preservation, climate change strategies, biodiversity conservation, and maritime port and coastal management.

We also provide full scholarships for short training courses on various aspects of public policy and administration, including public health, education, port management and climate change adaptation. All these courses are offered under what we call the Singapore Co-operation Programme. We also offer a postgraduate scholarship every year for a one-year masters in maritime law at the National University of Singapore that is open to Arctic-indigenous people. That would be how we are working quite closely, I believe, with indigenous communities in the Arctic.

Lord Oxburgh also spoke about some of our economic interests. I mentioned earlier that we obviously have no territorial or resource claims, and we recognise the importance of responsible Arctic resource development. We have some capacity and experience in logistics in the maritime and offshore sectors, including—it might be a surprise to some people—icebreakers, ice-class vessels, and the construction of offshore rigs for use in Arctic conditions. A Singaporean company, Keppel Sea Marine, part of the Keppel Offshore & Marine Group, was in fact the first Asian company to build icebreakers, completing two for the Russian company Lukoil in 2008. Keppel Sea Marine is currently building two other ice-class supply vessels and an ice-class duty rescue vessel, which will operate in the northern Caspian Sea. We are also conducting research on green rig technology. The same company, Keppel Offshore & Marine, is currently collaborating with ConocoPhillips to conceptualise the world's first environmentally friendly Arctic green rig, bearing in mind the importance of protecting the fragile Arctic environment.

Q307 Lord Hannay of Chiswick: I wonder if we could look at your two countries' active involvement as observers on the Arctic Council. Could you say a little about what both Japan and Singapore are doing to make an effective contribution to the work of the Arctic Council? It would help the Committee a great deal if you could give a certain amount of specifics

about this. Have Japan and Singapore raised any issues at the Arctic Council on their own? How do you prioritise the work of the Arctic Council in terms of your involvement, i.e. which bits of it interest Japan and Singapore and what do you do about making those interests known to the members of the Arctic Council?

Keiichi Hayashi: First of all, I should be talking about the basic attitude of Japan in relation to international co-operation. We believe that a prerequisite of international co-operation in the context of the Arctic is first of all the rule of law. We certainly want territorial disputes and maritime delimitation issues in the Arctic to be settled peacefully in accordance with international law.

From that perspective, Prime Minister Abe has announced the policy of proactive contribution to peace based on the principle of international co-operation. To the best of our ability, we are ready to contribute to international efforts to make best use of the opportunities emerging in the Arctic and also address the challenges I outlined earlier. More specifically, we are concerned with developing a international joint research exchange programme not only with the Arctic countries but with other observer countries such as the UK by making the most of Japan's historically accumulated expertise in science—observation and research of the Arctic, as well as advanced technology. Japan will feed back as much as possible on the outcome of initiatives relevant to international fora such as the working groups and task forces of the Arctic Council.

In Japan, we have what we call the National Institute of Polar Research and the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology. The experts from these organisations have made presentations at Arctic monitoring and assessment programmes about the present state of Japan's Arctic research, which enjoyed a positive assessment. In addition, Japan's experts participated in the writing of the report by the programme. On top of this, Japan dispatches experts to the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna working group, the Task Force for Enhancing Scientific Co-operation in the Arctic and the Task Force on Arctic Marine Oil Pollution Prevention, where they make a contribution to the discussions. All these contributions are based on the cumulative expertise and knowledge we have gained over the past 50 years.

Q308 Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Thank you, Ambassador. If you can forgive me for saying so, most of your response was at a high level of generality, although in the latter part, which related to the work of the task forces, you gave some specific examples. Could you perhaps

say whether Japan has ever intervened in a discussion in the Arctic Council in its place as an observer or whether it is purely a silent observer simply reporting back what other people are saying?

Keiichi Hayashi: My Lord, it comes back to one question that we have been raising, which is the current status of observers in the Arctic Council. In the current internal guidelines of the Arctic Council, the roles that observer states are expected to play are not very clear, from our perspective. There are various restrictions of a fairly limited scope. Restrictions are imposed on the scope of contributions that observers can make. From our perspective, we would like to make a much bigger contribution by providing scientific expertise and advanced technology for the Council's activities under the current structure. From our perspective, if you want us to make more contribution, it would help if the council made it easier for the observer states to make a contribution by expanding the scope of engagement.

The Chairman: Ambassador, we will come on to reform in question six.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: It is quite an important point. I want to just follow it up.

The Chairman: Yes, absolutely.

Keiichi Hayashi: I am sorry that I cannot be very specific, but I cannot give exactly what these experts have offered. If I could, perhaps I ought to give you a better idea. However, I am saying here that our contribution would have been expanded with changes to the status of observers.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Thank you. That is very interesting and helpful. However, am I right therefore in feeling that the view of your Government is that you wish to contribute more, but you are inhibited from doing so by the way the Arctic Council does its business and deals with observers on the Council? That is an interesting point. I deduce from what you say that it is a little like when President Chirac said, at a certain moment in a quite different context, "This is a good moment to keep quiet". Is that the role of observers?

Keiichi Hayashi: Japan has just been admitted to observer status, and I do not want to be seen as making complaints. However, all I am saying is that we would be very happy to expand our contributions, if we were given a greater role in the Arctic Council.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Thank you very much.

Foo Chi Hsia: My Lord Chairman, if I may, Singapore believes that decision-making at the Arctic Council is the responsibility of Arctic states, which hold sovereign rights and territorial

jurisdiction in the Arctic region, as well as the Permanent Participants, who are afforded full consultative status at the Council. Just talking about the structure of the Arctic Council, it allows observers like Singapore to make a full and meaningful contribution at the level of the working groups and task forces, so we have contributed in five quite specific areas in which we believe we have some experience and expertise and converge with the work of the Arctic Council.

The first area is in the development of safe Arctic shipping. We spoke about how Arctic shipping should be based on a rules-based international legal framework, and we support the adoption of the Polar Code at the International Maritime Organization. We participated actively in the discussion of the Polar Code at the IMO and we look forward to its adoption at the 68th session of the IMO's Maritime Environment Protection Committee in the middle of next year. We also have a track record of responsible maritime policies, including preventing oil spills as well as vessel-traffic management. As such, our maritime agencies have participated in meetings of a number of Arctic Council working groups related to Arctic shipping like the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment working group, the Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response working group, including the Task Force on Arctic Marine Oil Pollution Prevention. At an Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response working group meeting in November 2013, the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore shared our experience in oil-spill management, particularly the clean-up effort and lessons learned from the collision of two crude oil tankers in the Straits of Singapore in 1997.

The second area in which we contribute to the Arctic Council is in Arctic biodiversity conservation. Singapore is one of 22 countries, including Russia, China and Australia, that lie along the East Asian-Australasian flyway, and is an important stopover point for migratory shorebirds. Our Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve is home to over 230 species of birds, about 50% or 118 species of which are migratory, so many Arctic migratory species are threatened by overharvest and habitat alteration outside the Arctic. Singapore recognises and believes that it can play a role in the conservation and monitoring efforts of these birds' populations. The Singapore National Parks Board therefore provides data on Arctic migratory birds passing through Singapore to the Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative under the umbrella of the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna working group. The Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve is also assisting as a capacity development centre for regional sites, providing training and

assistance to improve site management, protection strategies for migratory birds and population census technologies.

The Chairman: High Commissioner, this is really important evidence, but I need you to summarise a little more at the moment because of time. However, if you would like to submit that to us in detail, that would be very useful work for us. I do not want in any way to belittle it; I am not. However, it would be useful if we could just summarise it a little more at the moment. Thank you.

Foo Chi Hsia: We were asked for specificity. I will be happy to run through the last three areas. In fact, I have spoken about this already. The responsible development of resources in the Arctic is the third area that we are contributing to. In my answer to Lord Oxburgh about some of our economic interests, I spoke about that. The fourth area of contribution is the co-operation with Arctic-indigenous communities. Again, I spoke about that with quite a bit of specificity in my earlier answer.

The fifth area of contribution is to build public awareness of the Arctic. Again, we spoke about how the understanding of the Arctic should really go beyond the Arctic to the rest of the world, including in Asia. We have done our part in encouraging education and promoting interests in Arctic-related issues, not just among Singaporeans but among the more than 15 million visitors to Singapore annually. We have done a couple of joint activities with Norwegians, Canadians and others to launch exhibitions and run workshops to talk about Arctic issues in Singapore. There is a possibility of having the Arctic Circle Assembly—Lord Addington was there earlier—to bring one of the Arctic Circle fora to Singapore some time next year as well, working with the World Ocean Conference to do so. Thank you very much.

Q309 Lord Tugendhat: Obviously, the structures of the Japanese and Singaporean economies and the nature of their participation in international trade are at opposite ends of the spectrum and about as different as two countries could be, but that said, do you feel that Japan and Singapore have any common interests in the Arctic Council with other observer states? In particular, are there common interests with the United Kingdom and areas in which Japan and Singapore, separately or together, might be able to advance common interests with the United Kingdom?

The Chairman: I must ask if you can keep the answers fairly concise at this point, please, Ambassador.

Keiichi Hayashi: Like in many other issues, the UK and Japan have a lot in common, being island nations that are heavily dependent on trade and also very keen on global environmental issues. We share recognition of the challenges relating to the Arctic, so we consider the UK a very important partner among observer states. We are concerned with developing an international joint research exchange programme, which I have just mentioned, not only with the Arctic countries but with the United Kingdom. We just held a meeting of the UK-Japan Joint Committee on Science and Technology Co-operation. That was held on 4 November, where the possibilities of Japan-UK joint research on the Arctic were discussed. We also welcome the UK-Japan workshop on autonomous investigations of the Arctic's response to changing climate, held from 18 to 19 November at the British Embassy in Tokyo. We would very much like to further promote co-operation with the UK.

Foo Chi Hsia: Thank you, my Lord Chairman. In terms of our interest with Japan, we have a longstanding collaboration with Japan on maritime issues, including in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, and we continue to have several bilateral dialogues with Japan on how we could work on various maritime issues, including in the Arctic. In terms of the UK, I believe that we have much to learn from observers with long-standing interests in the Arctic, like the UK, which has a long and distinguished history of Arctic exploration and research. We share a common interest in advancing the safe and sustainable development of the Arctic, and we pay particularly close attention to various aspects of development in the Arctic, whether that is the human, environmental or commercial dimensions. Both our countries, as well as Japan of course, are also committed and constructive players at international fora such as the IMO and international climate-change negotiations. All these common areas form strong grounds for possible collaborations, and we certainly think that there are many opportunities for us to learn from the UK as a leader in Arctic science and environmental research. Thank you.

Lord Soley: Very briefly, and maybe in writing, could you give us perhaps more guidance on whether and how both Singapore and Japan, both of which have very good reputations in scientific research, could work more closely with British institutions, both universities and others, on research and development? I get the feeling that both of you would be interested in doing that, but it may be something you could answer in writing.

The Chairman: Yes, that is a very good suggestion. Thank you, Lord Soley. Baroness Browning, our Japanese Ambassador has answered part of that question, but I am not sure we have given Singapore the area you are going to cover. Maybe we could give the High Commissioner a chance to answer.

Q310 Baroness Browning: There are 32 observer states, and they are a mixture. Some are nation states, some are NGOs. Given that there has been a little comment already by Mr Vincent Rigby about the number of observer states, do you feel that you could make a better contribution as an observer state if there were some quite big restructuring of the Arctic Council, the observers and the way in which the whole structure works at the moment? Would that allow you to make a greater contribution?

The Chairman: High Commissioner, would you like to start on this one? Again, I need to ask you to keep your comments fairly brief and write to us if there are other things you wish to add.

Foo Chi Hsia: Yes, sure. We are a very new observer of the Arctic Council. We do not think it is our position to suggest a major reform of the Arctic Council at this stage. However, we think there are other possible fora that have a bigger umbrella. For example, the Arctic Circle Assembly that has been held in Iceland for the last two years has the ability to allow more players—whether observers, NGOs or industry—to be able to contribute to the overall discussion on developments in the Arctic and to learn from one another.

There is also the Conference of Arctic Parliamentarians, in which we also participate by sending our parliamentarians. There are different structures and fora that allow all of us to learn from one another. To that extent we could contribute to greater knowledge and expertise, but at this stage we do not feel that we are in a position to suggest a reform of the Arctic Council.

Viscount Hanworth: Were you referencing the Arctic Circle in your response?

Foo Chi Hsia: I meant the Arctic Circle Assembly.

Baroness Browning: If there were a quite dramatic change, for example if there were a lot of countries and others applying to become observer states or if there were a significant change in the speed at which the seaway opened up and the ice melted, is there a danger that they would say, “Enough is enough. We have enough observers.”?

Foo Chi Hsia: I am not sure we are in a position to speak on their behalf.

Baroness Browning: Do you get that sense? I understand that a comment has been made that in backroom talks that has been the subject of discussion within the Council.

Keiichi Hayashi: If I may, we should not be talking about number games, but as a constructive suggestion we might say in days ahead that observer status is in fact given to very diverse actors such as state governments and governmental and non-governmental organisations. This might be making the role of observer a little obscure and there may be confusion because of that. It would be perhaps beneficial to consider, before the 20th anniversary of the council in 2016, reviewing the manner in which the council's observer system is operated, with the characteristics of each type of actor taken into account.

The Chairman: Ambassador, thank you very much. Ambassador, perhaps I could ask you one very quick question. I noticed from our papers that Japan has appointed an ambassador to the Arctic since you have become an observer state. Is this something that serious observer states should do? Would it be good for the United Kingdom to follow suit?

Keiichi Hayashi: I am not making any suggestion, but we have appointed the Ambassador in Charge of Arctic Affairs and he has been participating in the senior officials' meetings of the Arctic Council and so on. It is probably good practice to have some focal point of different government agencies. Obviously, the challenges related to the Arctic are very diverse and they involve so many actors, governmental and non-governmental. It probably makes sense to have one single person to oversee that.

The Chairman: Thank you. That is most useful. High Commissioner and Ambassador, thank you very much indeed for your evidence. If there is anything else you wish to add, we are very keen to receive further written evidence, particularly in the areas that were pointed out on the way through by Lord Soley and me. Thank you very much indeed for your contribution. I bring this session to an end. I remind Members that we are still broadcasting, and we will start the next session in just a minute.