



UK-Japan Joint Dialogue with Civil Society – Meeting Minutes

Session Overview

The second meeting of the Joint Dialogue with Civil Society (JDCS), held under Chapter 16 – Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), was held on 23 October 2025 via video conference.

Participants from the UK and Japan had a productive open dialogue with stakeholders from civil society organisations, with the Chair of the UK’s Domestic Advisory Group (DAG) acting as the independent moderator.

The meeting agenda and list of participants follow the meeting minutes, as annexes.

Opening Remarks

The moderator welcomed participants and outlined the session agenda which included presentations and items relating to trade and labour and trade and environment, presented by civil society organisations from the UK and Japan.

The JDCS began by reading a joint statement, which highlighted the importance and strength of the UK and Japan’s trade and investment relationship, alongside the importance of them working together to ensure effective implementation of the TSD chapter of CEPA. A recap from the UK-Japan Joint Dialogue in 2023 and Sub-Committee in 2022 was shared. The UK and Japan Government Co-Chairs made opening remarks. They encouraged further engagement and cooperation between both parties, and emphasised the value and importance of views from civil society to shape and contribute towards the effective implementation of the UK-Japan CEPA. Finally, it was noted that their views would inform the upcoming UK-Japan Sub-Committee on 9 December 2025.

Trade and Labour

UK civil society raised questions and sought updates around the ratification and implementation of ILO (International Labour Organisation) Conventions, mainly relating to occupational safety, non-discrimination, freedom of association, and the right to strike. Subsequently, a Japanese civil society representative noted hurdles for ratification of ILO Convention 111 (C111) (such as restrictions placed on expression of political opinion by civil servants), and pointed to the continued challenges in regard to implementation of C87 in Japan.

There were discussions around Japan’s leadership role in bolstering international labour standards, as well as recent legislative updates and domestic developments. The UK civil society shared similar updates and exchanges of useful information.



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Japanese civil society also presented on the UK Modern Slavery Act (2015), and its implications for human rights due diligence in global supply chains, including suggestions for areas of meaningful exchange. There was also further discussion on how Japan engages third parties to promote sustainability in supply chains, particularly in the absence of binding legislation. A Japanese civil society representative set out the various measures taken to prohibit modern slavery, and the way in which Japan is developing non-binding legislation in the hope to address forced labour and exploitation within supply chains. Stakeholders on both sides raised concerns around worker's rights and modern slavery in global supply chains, emphasising the importance of robust enforcement and international cooperation. The dialogue highlighted the need to support SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises), in meeting sustainability and due diligence requirements. Both governments outlined their current initiatives to bolster capacity and promote responsible business practices.

Trade and Environment

Participants discussed cooperation between the UK and Japan on sustainable fisheries management. The UK shared updates on progress in advancing sustainable fisheries policy through Fisheries Management Plans, detailing the evidence-based plans in place. The efforts to counter Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing were also covered; specifically, how the UK and Japan are working together through multilateral fora. Japan reported that IUU fishing remains a concern and assured participants that the UK and Japan are working closely on this, highlighting cooperation efforts which include port state measures, and ongoing engagement with regional fisheries management organisations.

The discussion proceeded to cover sustainable forestry management and forest risk commodities, with insights into the cooperation efforts in this space. The UK emphasised the commitments in place to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation, and the objectives of the UK Timber Regulations to tackle illegal logging. Japan's Clean Wood Act was highlighted as a key instrument for ensuring legal timber use, having been revised and enacted in April 2025. Both governments noted the cooperation efforts undertaken under CEPA. Japan also emphasised that halting deforestation is a critical issue, acknowledging various measures exist to prevent deforestation and forest degradation. These are not necessarily limited to legal regulations. The use of private certification schemes and the promotion of voluntary guidelines would also be good examples.

Civil society stakeholders shared questions about greenhouse gas emission reductions and presented on Japan's Carbon Neutrality by 2050 Plan. The importance of facilitating an inclusive dialogue between citizens and SMEs, and the need for shared responsibility in the transition to a low-carbon economy was also raised. Japanese civil society stakeholders also presented on community-driven efforts to promote clean energy, and Japan's GX-ETS (Green Transformation Emissions Trading System). The UK provided further policy updates on



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emission trading schemes in relation to its Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which will be introduced from 1 January 2027. Stakeholders raised questions about the design and impact of these policies, particularly on developing economies and SMEs. Both governments outlined their future plans to support low-carbon transitions, and emphasised the importance of international alignment to ensure a coordinated approach, by working closely with all interested stakeholders.

Further discussions were held on agricultural practices and the impact of these on biodiversity, with the UK and Japanese governments reiterating their support for international biodiversity frameworks, highlighting their ongoing cooperation through various multilateral forums (including joint initiatives under the Convention on Biological Diversity).

Participants also highlighted the current and future collaborative efforts through multilateral environment forums, including in forestry, fisheries, biodiversity and sustainable supply chains. Both governments reaffirmed their shared commitments under international agreements, expressing interest in deepening bilateral cooperation. The dialogue underscored the importance of aligning domestic policy with global sustainability goals, and maintaining momentum through consistent engagement.

Closing Remarks

The moderator summarised and encouraged continued engagement beyond the JDCS. The UK and Japanese governments confirmed that stakeholder input would inform the upcoming Committee on Trade and Sustainable Development meeting on 9 December.

Both governments thanked participants for their contributions and emphasised their shared commitment to advancing sustainable development through inclusive and cooperative trade policy. The JDCS continues to serve as a vital mechanism for ensuring transparency, accountability, and meaningful stakeholder involvement in the implementation of the UK-Japan CEPA.



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Annexes

Annex A – Agenda

- 1. Opening Remarks**
- 2. Introduction by Participants of Civil Society**
- 3. Statements by Governments of UK and Japan**
- 4. Trade and Labour**

Topics for Discussion including:

- Ratification and Implementation of Fundamental ILO Conventions
- Relevant Cooperation Activities between the UK and Japan

5. Trade and Environment, including Trade and Climate Action

Topics for Discussion including:

- Sustainable Fisheries Management
- Sustainable Forestry Management
- Greenhouse Gas Reduction
- Biological Diversity
- Relevant Cooperation Activities between the UK and Japan.

6. Summary

7. Conclusion



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Annex B – List of Participants

UK Civil Society Participants

- Trade and Public Policy Network [TaPP]
- techUK
- World Wildlife Fund [WWF]
- Trade Union Congress [TUC]
- University of Sheffield [UoS]
- Trade Justice Movement [TJM]
- UK Chamber of Shipping [UK CoS]
- Agricultural Industries Confederation [AIC]

Japanese Civil Society Participants

- International Affairs Bureau, Keidanren (Japan Business Federation)
- Osaka University of Economics and Law
- World Wildlife Fund [WWF] Japan
- Japan Center for a Sustainable Environment and Society [JACSES]
- Japanese Trade Union Confederation (JTUC-RENGO)