

[Biography]

For JIIA the 6th Global Dialogue (January 28-30, 2025)

Ren Ito, Co-Founder and COO of Sakana AI

Ren Ito is the Co-Founder and COO of Sakana AI, a Tokyo-based R&D company on a quest to create a new kind of foundational AI model based on nature-inspired intelligence. Sakana AI has become Japan's fastest unicorn after one year in business, backed by Nvidia and a broad spectrum of Japanese enterprises.

Prior to Sakana, Ren took the lead on the global expansion of Mercari, Japan's first unicorn start-up as CEO of Mercari Europe, as well as successfully orchestrated its IPO of \$6bn in 2018. Before tech, Ren spent 15 years as a Japanese diplomat where he worked on the security alliance with the US, negotiated a free trade agreement with the EU, and represented Japan at the World Bank board. Ren is Senior Fellow at NYU Law School.

Ren received his LLM (NYU 2004) and LLB (University of Tokyo 2001) and is admitted to practice law in New York. Ren also holds his MA (Stanford University 2005).