

Ambassador's speech for the Emperor's birthday reception

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, last Friday a horrible terrorist attack occurred in Paris and more than 130 people perished. Last evening two Bosnian soldiers were killed near Sarajevo by a criminal or terrorist. Because of that, several people cancelled their attendance tonight. All of you that came here this evening are brave people.

I am really thankful for your presence.

Terrorism should never be tolerated for any reason and we strongly condemn it.

I would like to ask you to observe a minute of silence for the victims of the attacks.

Thank you.

It is my great privilege to welcome all of you here this evening to celebrate together the 82nd birthday of His Majesty Emperor Akihito of Japan. His Majesty Emperor Akihito was born on December 23rd, 1933, and enthroned in 1989 as the 125th Emperor of Japan.

Excellences,

I came to Sarajevo on May 20th this year as the third Japanese Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since then about a half year has passed. But to be very frank with you during this last half year, I was facing new political occurrences in BiH almost every day. I have to keep a watchful eye on BiH politics. For me BiH politics are such enigmatic, as if I am solving a complex jigsaw puzzle and I like such challenges. Before coming here, I was posted as Japanese Ambassador to Rwanda. As many of you might know, Rwanda also experienced tragedies about 20 years ago. The human security and the contribution to the post conflict peace process are among top priorities of Japanese government's aid politics. I'm sure that Japanese people stands by BiH people and continue to support BiH on its development, as we have done in Rwanda so far.

Recently I could witness a series of positive developments in BiH political scenes. Thanks to EU initiatives, SAA has been activated and current BiH coalition governments paid huge efforts to tackle reform agenda which will no doubt lead not only to the EU paths but also enlarge BiH economic opportunities more competitively and effectively. On its part, Japan will continue to support BiH on EU accession process.

Next year will be the 20th anniversary of Japan-BiH diplomatic relations. Our bilateral relations have been excellent so far, but on this special occasion of 20th anniversary, I intend to open new chapter of Japan-BiH bilateral relationship through among others realizing mutual high level visits, promoting economic investments and introducing Japanese culture. This year I had a privilege to receive Mr. Kentaro Sonoura, Parliamentary Vice Foreign Minister of Japan on the occasion of Srebrenica commemoration. For the marking of 20th anniversary of Japan and BiH relationship, higher level official visits in both sides would be epoch-making events for the ties of two countries.

Setting aside BiH political scenes, Bosnia and Herzegovina have huge economic potentials in such fields as tourism, agriculture and energies. But these potentialities or advantages have not been fully utilized or well known. As Japanese Ambassador to BiH, during my tenure, I do utmost efforts to stimulate Japan's investments to Bosnia and Herzegovina. For its first step, next year I intend to invite Japanese economic mission to BiH, which would be the first time in the history of bilateral relations and definitively would be an excellent opportunity to turn new pages of our economic relations.

Apart from many development assistance projects in BiH, our Embassy organizes a wide range of cultural events aimed at bringing Japan and Japanese culture closer to the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Among them I am proud of Japanese language course that was launched two years ago in cooperation with the University of Sarajevo and we have bigger number of new students every year. We will launch Japanese language proficiency test in this December for the first time. If any of my guests today are learning Japanese language regularly, try to take this exam for checking your Japanese skills.

Lastly, I'd like to mention one thing. As you can see, several Japanese companies display their latest products. Sony shows 4K Android TV and Panasonic 4K

smart TV, Olympus exhibits its 3D endoscope and Konica-Minolta displays its multi-functional printer, Toyota and Shimadzu will present their PR video.

Please enjoy their cutting edge technology.

Excellences, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On today's auspicious occasion, I would like to express my heartfelt wish for a long life of his Majesty, the Emperor of Japan and the happiness and further prosperity of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Now please allow me to propose a toast with Japanese sake. Those who have not glass of sake in hand, please taste it later on. Sake is provided in the corner of this room.

Now...Please join me. Kanpai.