

Distinguished Excellencies,

I am honoured to welcome you all at today's Japanese Tea Ceremony.

Chado or the Way of Tea has a long history and has significantly influenced Japanese culture, customs and the way of life. It can be said that, to learn about Chado, is to learn about the entire Japanese culture as Chado embodies elements of Japanese etiquette, architecture, gardens, arts and crafts, as well as Buddhism and Shinto religions. I hope that you will be able to recognize some of these elements during today's ceremony.

I am pleased to announce that our today's master of tea ceremony is Master Sokei Kimura of the renowned Urasenke tea school, London branch. Urasenke is an organization who has been preserving and promoting the tradition of Chado for the past 400 years, and it has offices in 135 countries worldwide.

After graduating from university, Master Kimura joined the Urasenke school in 1991. In 1994, Master Kimura become instructor at the Urasenke New York Branch, and since 1997 he has been a representative of the Urasenke London Branch. He has been holding presentations and lectures on Chado – The Way of Tea in many European countries. His latest Chado presentation was in Milan, Italy, where he joined the Grand Master of the Urasenke school for the opening of the Japanese Pavilion at Expo Milano 2015.

As tea ceremony is the art of spiritual exchange between the host and guests, please enjoy every minute of the ceremony. After the ceremony ends, you will have an opportunity to ask Master Kimura any question you might have, so feel free to expand your knowledge about Chado.

One of the basic concepts of tea ceremony is the belief that each meeting should be cherished as a unique experience of life. In Japanese, we describe this belief with a phrase "Ichi-go Ichi-e". So, do not miss this chance.

I sincerely hope that you will enjoy today's event and learn more about the traditional culture of my country. Hvala.