

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great privilege to welcome all of you here this evening to celebrate together the 83rd 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.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Japan-BiH diplomatic relations. At our last year's Emperor's Birthday reception I said that I intended to open new chapter of Japan-BiH bilateral relationship on this special occasion. However, I cannot forget to say the following. This year is also the 5th anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake. The situation is getting better in affected areas, but it will take a certain time to reconstruct these areas and to decommission the Fukushima Nuclear Power plant. I would like to express once again my sincere gratitude for heartfelt support and solidarity extended by the government and people of BiH.

Regarding the events marking of 20th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and BiH, I would like to touch upon them shortly. If you would like to find out more about it, the details are in the brochure which the Embassy prepared and you can find it at the entrance of this room. In the political sphere, Mr. Nobuo Kishi, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, paid an official visit to BiH and met several political leaders of this country. In the economic sphere, a Japanese business mission visited

BiH for the first time. I hope this visit will lead to some concrete investments in BiH. In the cultural sphere, the Embassy of Japan organized a series of cultural events, including the concert of Japanese drum team “Ondekoza”, with the sponsorship of JTI, which recorded a big success. In the sphere of development assistance of this year, the handover ceremony of the Project for Rehabilitation of Sports Center “Kantarevac” in Mostar was held. The handover ceremony of Japanese Next-Generation vehicles was also organized last month. You can see the history of 20 years of Japanese assistance to BiH both in the aforesaid Embassy’s brochure and in a pamphlet made by JICA.

The tight links in culture and sport sectors have also brought Japan and BiH closer. I am proud of Japanese language course that was launched four years ago in cooperation with the University of Sarajevo and we have nearly one hundred students who study Japanese language. As for sports, it is well known that Mr. Ivica Osim, a BiH national hero, used to be the Japanese national football team coach, and now Mr. Halilhodzic is the current coach of our national team. It is my great pleasure that the Government of Japan decided to award the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette to Mr. Osim in this memorial year. The decoration is awarded in recognition of his contribution to the development of football community in Japan and promotion of mutual understanding between two countries.

As you may know, Washoku, traditional Japanese food culture, is registered as an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. Today we exhibit and serve Japanese Sake, rice wine, as well as Japanese fresh rice which were harvested this autumn and transported immediately from

Japan. We wish that people in the world gets to know tasty Japanese rice. Using this fresh Japanese rice, we serve Sushi today, which is prepared by my cook at the residence. I hope you will enjoy it.

Lastly, I'd like to mention one more thing. As you can see, several Japanese companies display their latest products. Sony and Panasonic show 4K TV, Olympus exhibits its 4K platform for surgeries and Konica-Minolta displays its multi-functional printer, Toyota, Shimadzu and Takeda will present their PR video.

Please enjoy their cutting edge technology.

Excellences, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this 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 at the corner of this room.

Now...Please join me. Kanpai.