Honorable Minister Borovac,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honor and pleasure to welcome all of you here this evening to celebrate together our National Day.

As you may know, our National Day is a birthday of the Emperor Akihito, who will be 85 years old on 23rd December this year.

His Majesty will abdicate on 30th April, then the Crown Prince Naruhito is going to become the 126th Emperor of Japan on 1st May next year. The abdication of the Emperor is not usual, but also not the first time in the Japanese history, even if the last case was over two hundred years ago.

Regarding the bilateral relations between Japan and BiH, our cooperation has been growing in several fields this year.

The first political consultation between our Foreign Ministries was held successfully in Tokyo in May .

Our assistance is focusing mainly on the social sector, from which people benefit directly. This year we supported rehabilitation of 5 schools, 10 hospitals, including medical equipment and a demining project, which amounted totally in one million EUR in grant.

Our environmental project at Ugljevik Thermal Power Plant is also under way, in order to eliminate the air pollution in the area.

The academic cooperation has been further diversifying and many Japanese students participated in the exchange program at the University of Sarajevo this summer.

At the same time, we are taking a regional approach for our cooperation with the Western Balkans countries including invitation programs for youth and journalists, as well as an investment seminar in Japan next month and a Western Balkan Disaster Prevention Seminar in Sofia next February.

I hope that our bilateral relations will be further strengthened next year.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to take this opportunity to express my congratulation to Ms. Vahdeta Kazic for receiving the Imperial Decoration of Japan, the Order of the Rising Sun, Silver Rays. She served at our Embassy at the set-up time and has been supporting voluntarily the NGO activities.

Thanks to her contribution we can enjoy light rosy blossoms of the Sakura- cherry trees, as a symbol of peace, donated by the Japanese people in many parks and graveyards in Sarajevo and other cities in spring.

Today we witnessed the inauguration of the Presidency of BiH . We wish all the best to the new members of the Presidency, really hoping that this country will move forwards in the integrated and future-oriented course.

I would like to thank the representatives of Japanese companies in Sarajevo for joining us with the display of their products today.

Finally, I hope that you will enjoy this evening and wish you a happy end of year and a happy New year.

Thank you.

I would like to propose a toast for a long life of his Majesty, the Emperor and the happiness and further prosperity of the people of BiH.