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.

Our National Day is a birthday of the new Emperor Naruhito, who will be 60 years old on 23rd February this year.

His Majesty ascended the throne in May and the official Enthronement Ceremony was conducted in October last year, in which the Chairman of the Presidency of BiH, Mr. Komsic participated among foreign guests. Japan has a very short National Anthem, but a very long history of the imperial family, which is going on over two thousand years.

At the end of last year the new Government of BiH was finally formed and we hope that it will be successful and tackle in particular the stagnating reform issues, in favor of its people's interest.

We are also looking forward to cooperating with the new Government in the coming years.

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

Besides our continuous support to the school rehabilitation and health care and demining sector, which included totally 11 projects last year, the Japanese Government has granted necessary equipment and special vehicles for water supply, agro- meteorological observation, civil protection and motorway patrol to both entities through the central Government. It will enhance the capacity and effective working of public services. New projects of technical assistance have also started in the field of public transportation with Sarajevo Canton and mentoring services in SME.

The cooperation with the University of Sarajevo is growing and a new Japanese language course for post graduate students has started last October. Recently, the Japanese government has decided to support the University for modernizing the facility for Japanese studies with new IT equipment. This facility will be a good platform to promote mutual understanding and youth exchange between Japan and BiH.

In the economic field we are observing some positive developments in the manufacturing and IT sector in BiH and other Western Balkans countries. We hope that the new Government will take further necessary measures to attract foreign investments. In this regard, I would like to underline that a political stability and a functional government are most important conditions for foreign investors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The next Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games will be held again in Tokyo this year.

Although the whole process of qualification to the Games is still going on, some Bosnian athletes have already qualified. I wish all the BH athletes including Mr. Amel Tuka, Mr. Mesud Pezer, Ms. Larisa Ceric and the Sitting volley ball team a great success this summer. A Japanese Southern island's town, Isen-cho, is ready to support and cheer BH players as a host town. It was in the Nagano Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games in 1998, that the BH athletes participated for the first time after independence. The motto of the Games, which was announced just 3 days ago, is "United by Emotion". We warmly welcome all the Bosnian delegation back again in Japan and sincerely hope that the event will get people in this country closer and more united.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to the representatives of Japanese companies in Sarajevo for joining us with the display of the products today.

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

Thank you.

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