

Remarks by H.E. Mr. MIZUUCHI Ryuta,
Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Zambia
On the Occasion of the Sake Tasting during the Workshop on
Grassroots Grant Assistance for Human Security Projects
Wednesday, 30th September 2020

Hon. Mr. Sydney Mushanga, Provincial Minister of Central Province of the
Republic of Zambia,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now, we will move to the Sake tasting. "Sake", or "Japanese rice wine" is a Japanese national liquor brewed from rice through fermentation. It is not clear when the Sake-brewing started, but it is estimated that already by the end of the 8th century the rice-growing was practiced in Japan systematically and that in the Japanese state institutions at that time there was an officer in charge of Sake-brewing. Therefore, the tradition of Sake-brewing must have a history of more than 1,300 years. During the Muromachi-Shogunate (14th – 16th century), duties were imposed upon Sake, making it one of the state revenues resources.

During the Edo-Shogunate (17th – 19th century), Sake-brewing was established as a commercial industry and basic brewing and conservation technologies were developed. It spread nation-wide as ordinary people's common alcoholic beverage. The variety of climatic and geological characteristics of Sake-producing regions has led to the diversity of taste of Sake. Also, the rice species itself and the malt used for fermentation gives the Sake unique differences in aroma, flavor, sweetness or dryness, and other indicators. Today, there are more than 10, 000 brands of Sake in Japan.

Sake has been enjoyed mainly in Japan for a long time. However, the situation was greatly changed in 2007 when Sake was given one specific section in the "International Wine Competition" in London. Many global wine specialists discovered in Sake its special tastefulness, a character distinct from wines, yet a universal value of some kind. Thus, the fame has spread world-wide and Sake has found its lovers all over the world. The Japanese

Government supports its voyage and hopes that the Sake produced in Japan will explore other new frontiers where it will be loved and enjoyed by the respective local population.

Personally, I feel that there is great potential for Sake in Zambia. Alcoholic beverages such as wines are generally quite expensive in this country. If Sake is offered at a reasonable price, it will certainly attract many Zambians. It will, of course, depend upon the import duty rate, as well.

Sake is delivered to its customers via various processing procedure, namely rice farming, fermentation and quality management at breweries, transport and sales on the wholesale and consumer market. In other words, when rice is turned into Sake, it is no longer just a staple food of the Japanese population but has an absolute value chain. If Zambia needs to establish a value chain for agricultural products, then rice farmers in Mongu or Nakonde or investors in agricultural business may attempt to brew Sake from Zambian-grown rice. Sake production is no longer Japan's monopoly. It has spread to the USA, Australia and other countries where rice is grown.

Ladies and Gentlemen (at this moment the first round of Sake shall be served),

In Japan, on the occasion, for instance, of a groundbreaking for a new construction work, Sake is poured into the soil or the object that will be cultivated. By offering Sake, and paying respect, to the guardian God (or Holiness) of the area, the desired safety during the work is believed to be secured. From this viewpoint, today's Sake tasting can be understood as something which might safeguard further enhancement of our friendship between Japan and Central Province, as well as good working relations among ourselves. In concluding, I wish you all continued health and success, as well as an optimal kick-off of a fruitful cooperation. May I now ask you to raise the glass and join me in my toast...?

Cheers and Kampai!