

Remarks by H. E. Mr HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
for the IWC 2023 Award Winning Sake Tasting
on 5th July 2023

Distinguished Guests,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all, the outstanding guests who have played a vital role in Japanese sake production and promotion, to the Embassy of Japan in the UK this evening. My wife and I would like to convey our gratitude for your participation in the International Wine Challenge 2023 Award Winning Sake Tasting event.

Since pre-pandemic lives had returned back to the British society, we have been engaged in hosting a series of meeting, receptions and events here at the Embassy. Among them, I must tell you, today's event is the most enjoyable one. You will obviously be able to enjoy a variety of high standard and tasty Japanese sake this evening. Before doing so, being sorry to say, I would like to share with you just a few points.

First, I would like to congratulate the eleven Japanese sake producers who have won this year's IWC Sake Awards. It is no mean feat to survive such intense competition with as many as 1,601 rivals. Let me express my profound admiration for your impressive expertise and sterling efforts in producing the unique offerings that have led to your great achievement in this year's Sake Awards. Your endeavours have surely gone a long way to making Japanese sake even more popular and bringing it to ever more people in the UK and across the world.

Secondly, I have a good news that both the export volume and value of Japanese sake to the UK increased significantly from 2020 to 2022 during and after the massive challenge of the pandemic. In this regard, may I extend my heartfelt

appreciation to the IWC Sake judges who since 2007 have made the Sake Awards such a prestigious international competition, and to the Sake Samurai Association and everybody present here engaging in the sake industry for their tireless endeavours in ardently promoting Japanese sake over so many years. I trust their continued commitment to and enthusiasm for Japanese sake will contribute to an even greater presence of Japanese sake across the UK.

Thirdly, I am very confident that Japanese sake has played, and will continue to play, a critical role in further strengthening the unshakable relationship between Japan and the UK by deepening understanding about Japan and popularising Japanese culture among British people. We make a point of serving Japanese sake at the Embassy's events and receptions so that people from various sectors and backgrounds will be able to experience and appreciate it. Indeed, we served Japanese sake to very important guests including former British prime ministers and incumbent cabinet ministers at such occasions as the Emperor's Birthday Reception held in February this year. It is also noteworthy that Japanese sake was provided at G7 Hiroshima Summit as well as the Japan-UK Leaders' Working Dinner also held in Hiroshima in May this year.

Lastly, it would not be too much to say that Japanese sake, with its long history and refined flavour, perfectly embodies Japanese tradition and culture. It is also important to note that Japanese sake goes well not only with Japanese cuisine but also with British and other cuisines from around the world. I am pretty sure that the continued dedication of everyone here this evening to enhancing awareness and popularity of Japanese sake will undoubtedly reinforce the truly amicable relationship between the peoples of Japan and the UK.

Thank you very much indeed.