

Speech of His Excellency Mr KANO Takehiro
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Delegate of Japan to UNESCO
On the International Tea Day Cerebration

Monday 10 June 2024

1 It is a great honor for me to be here today to participate in the third edition of International Tea Day Cerebration here at UNESCO. I would like to thank Ms Marietta Bantchev, President of the UNESCO Community Association (UCA), and everyone involved in the organization of this reception.

2 As you know, in 2019, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution designating May 21 as International Tea Day. The resolution considers tea not only as a product which can bring health benefits but also as important source of income especially for family in developing countries and least developed countries, helping

us to tackle challenges such as poverty or food insecurity and to contribute to SDGs realization.

3 Tea culture seems to be introduced in Japan from ancient China. According to *Nihon Kōki*, Japanese history text established around mid 9th century, the high priest Eichu offered tea to the Emperor Saga in early 9th century. Then, it developed under the influence of Zen Buddhism and samurai culture during the Middle Ages known as Kamakura period from late 12th to early 14th century.

The culture of tea ceremony, which has been handed down to the present day Japan, flourished during the Warring States period from the mid-15th to 16th centuries, when warlords competed for supremacy in Japan, and was highly favoured by warlords and great merchants as a place to seek brief moments of peace and relaxation, or as a stage for diplomatic negotiations.

By the way, Japan's current UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador is Grand Master Sen Genshitsu, the 15th Iemoto (head) of the Urasenke family that established tea ceremony in 16th century.

Finally, from the 17th century onward, during the Edo period (1603-1868), the custom of tea drinking spread to the general public.

4 With such a long history, Japanese tea culture has lasted until today because of the constant innovation that has been brought to it, rather than simple copy-paste of an established tradition. At today's reception, we invited Haruna Inc. to the booth of the Japanese Delegation so that we can showcase innovative efforts made by a Japanese company giving new life to tradition. The company has developed a new concept of tea products by combining traditional Japanese tea with French technology and culture. We hope you will enjoy the drinks and sweets based on Japanese tea.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

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