

## **National Day Reception to celebrate the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan in 2023**

February 23rd is the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor, NARUHITO, and it is celebrated as a national holiday throughout Japan every year. On this auspicious occasion, the Embassy of Japan in Ethiopia and the Mission of Japan to the African Union hosted a reception to celebrate the 63rd birthday of His Majesty the Emperor on 22 February 2023.

This year's reception was the first time to be held in full swing since the spread of COVID-19 in 2020. While taking all possible precautionary measures, more than 300 guests enjoyed a variety of Japanese dishes including Sushi, Oden, and Japanese sake.

During her welcoming speech, Ambassador ITO Takako of Japan to Ethiopia pointed out the steady implementation of the peace process in Ethiopia since November last year, and called for continued support for victims of the conflict and for reconstruction. She also showed her understanding of the importance of the National Dialogue initiative, and stated that Japan is considering additional support for the National Dialogue. Ambassador ITO also emphasized that for Japan, which is a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2023-2024 and the Presidency of G7 for this year, "peace" is an important theme for the year 2023, and that G7 Summit in Hiroshima, a very symbolic international peace city, will be an opportunity to convey a message of peace to the world.

Followed was a traditional Japanese Sake Barrel opening ceremony, called "Kagami-biraki". In Japan, it is customary to open a big sake barrel with a wooden hammer for some celebrations in order to wish good health and well-being for the guests and to share the Japanese sake in the barrel.

After the sake barrel was opened with loud cheering voices, Ambassador HORIUCHI of Japan to African Union proposed a toast, in which he reflected on the year 2022, when TICAD 8 was held. He also stated that in 2023 Japan, as the G7 president and a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, would like to continue listening to the voice of Africa, communicating with the people and government of the Continent, and making every effort to resolve global challenges. Through this process, he expressed his desire to consolidate multilateralism.

The reception to celebrate the Emperor's Birthday was a good opportunity to consolidate the friendly and cooperative relationship between Japan and Africa including Ethiopia.



Welcoming Remarks by Amb. ITO



Kagami Biraki  
(Japanese Sake Barrel opening ceremony)



Proposal of a toast by Amb.  
HORIUCHI



Serving Japanese Foods