

I am very honoured to be a speaker here today.

First of all, on behalf of all the participants from abroad, I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Lagos State for providing enabling business environment for numerous companies located in this State. I also appreciate the efforts of Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) for organizing this Trade Fair.

It goes without saying that Nigeria is the largest economy in Africa. Nigeria is vested with abundant natural resources, growing human resources and rich culture. International community is now paying close attention to the potential of this country. However, in order to turn the potential into the reality, trade and investment relations with foreign countries play an indispensable role. They serve as the catalyst for job creation, higher productivity, capital access, learning and innovation, and expansion for technology spill overs. In this context, Lagos is the economic hub for Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Lagos International Trade Fair is the largest International Trade Fair in Nigeria, and one of the bests in Africa. This spectacular 10-day trade fair plays a vital role in promoting foreign investment into Nigeria as well as Sub-Saharan Africa. I believe that all of us gathering here are key players for sustainable and industrial development in Nigeria and Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Taking this opportunity, I would like to inform you that immediately after this opening ceremony, there will be an opening event of the Japan Pavilion jointly organized by the Embassy of Japan in Nigeria and JETRO Lagos office. In that event, I will be performing *Kagami-biraki*, which is a Japanese traditional ceremony performed on special occasions like today. Breaking Sake barrel with hammers to open up, perhaps for the first time in Nigeria, aimed at celebrating and wishing a success of the Pavilion and the Fair.

You are all welcome to experience this traditional Japanese ceremony and to see a wide range of consumer goods such as vehicles, electronics, home appliances, processed foods, as well as industrial goods and more, to fulfil the everyday lives of the people of Nigeria. The theme of the Japan Pavilion this year is "Made in Japan, Made for Women" (applause). Therefore, fashionable ladies are especially welcome. Of course, not-so-fashionable gentlemen are also welcome (laugh).

To conclude, let me wish you a great success of this year's Lagos International Trade Fair. Thank you for your good laugh and kind attention. (End)