

Hyogo Tourism and Products Promotion Reception Speech
by Consul General Masahiro Omura, August 20, 2013

The Honorable Brad Owen, Lieutenant Governor of Washington, the Honorable Toshizo Ido, Governor of Hyogo, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to this exhibition of Hyogo products and tourism in honor of the 50th anniversary of sister relations between Washington State and Hyogo Prefecture. I am especially honored to co-host this event alongside Governor Ido, and look forward to having Lieutenant Governor Owen lead a toast in honor of this enduring bond and to another half century of strong ties.

Fifty years ago, when the U.S. and Japan were very different places, Washington and Hyogo recognized the economic and cultural value of forging a partnership and, tonight, we stand together on a firm foundation of many successful exchanges to highlight how we can start the next stage of this journey through expanding business and tourism opportunities.

The Northwest, gateway to Asia, offers a unique combination of entrepreneurial culture and natural beauty. Locally-based companies including Costco and Starbucks have already discovered the appeal of doing business in Hyogo, a place which has its own natural and cultural treasures, along with a vibrant, resilient, and innovative population. At this reception, you will be able to savor Hyogo's famous culinary delights including renowned Kobe beef, shipped directly from the source, the Prefecture's best sake, and its celebrated rice perfectly paired with Northwest seafood and pressed into delectable sushi.

Now more than ever, discovery awaits you in Hyogo and I have confidence that the special link with Washington and new connections that will come over the next fifty years will make both regions even stronger.

Thank you.