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INTERVIEW

## JETRO Geneva hosts a Standardization Expert

Interview with Ms. Yukiko Kotani, Director of Standards and Conformity Assessment

Standardization has and is playing an essential, yet underestimated, role in global trade.

National, regional and global standards help reducing the costs and increasing the quality of the products.

The massive boom of the global trade has been greatly facilitated by some standards such as intermodal containers. Harbors and ships all over the world adapted to those containers, resulting in a substantial rationalization of shipment and therefore a massive decrease of the shipment costs.

JETRO strongly supports standardization efforts and informs companies on the latest development in this field.

Exporters and investors can seek for information on the "[Standards and regulations](#)" section on JETRO Website.

Furthermore, JETRO Geneva is very happy to welcome an expert in Standardization. Ms. Yukiko Kotani comes from the Japanese Standardization Association and shares JETRO Geneva office since April 2019 as Director of Standards and Conformity Assessment.

She kindly answered our ques-



Ms. Yukiko Kotani from the Japanese Standards Association will share JETRO Geneva's office.

tions about her tasks here in Geneva.

### *Could you please introduce your professional background?*

I joined the Japanese Standards Association, JSA, in 2005. The organization gave me the opportunity to move from one department to another, roughly every 3 or 4 years, to better understand every corner of standardization. For example, I have worked in information system, international standardization, capacity building, translation and sales. Although I enjoyed all depart-

ments, I find training young experts and responding to the customers' needs to be particularly interesting for me.

### *For our readers who might not be familiar with standardization, could you define what a "standard" is?*

Standards are technical documents which make your life better and safer. The word "standard" could be used to describe something ordinary or uninteresting, but they are more than that.

If you love history, you could find some standards back in the ancient civilization; many monarchs were eager to invent common calendars and measurements to rule their country effectively. The industrial revolution also needed standards. What if mass-produced products were of different sizes, shapes and safety levels?

Today, you don't have to worry about the safety of cheese and milk thanks to the dairy food standards. You can enjoy barbecues because of the safety standards on grills. Standards are everywhere in your life!

*(continued on page 2)*

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会見

INTERVIEW

(continued from page 1)

### *What is the Japanese Standards Association and what does it do?*

We do almost everything related to standards. We create standards, promote their use, try to reach stakeholders to ask for their participation in standards-making processes, provide training courses for industries and academia... the list goes on. We are currently working hard to be a place for anyone seeking solutions for both Japanese and international standards and standardization.

### *Which fields of standardization are especially relevant for Japan?*

As you may expect, Japan has long been active in making standards for a variety of industrial areas, such as electrical devices and automobiles. More recently, our interest grew especially in areas such as IoT, AI, circular economy, sustainable finance and services.

### *What are the latest trends in standardization?*

Traditionally, standards were discussed within the context of one industry. It meant that you could focus on one or two technical committees to make standards. That is not the case today, especially in innovative areas. For example, if you talk about standards for IoT, they could be relevant to almost all industries, e.g. medical, electrical, audiovisual and service industries.

### *What are your main tasks here in Geneva?*

One of my missions is to connect people from Japan, namely my colleagues and Japanese stakeholders, with international/European standards bodies and help enhance collaboration between them. That's why I often travel across Europe to visit various organizations. Geneva is important because it is home to two international standards organizations, ISO and IEC.

In addition to working as a bridge between Japan and Europe in terms of standards, I am looking forward to my direct contribution to ISO and IEC activities in some way, for example by joining working groups or workshops while I am here in Geneva.

### *What do you think about Switzerland and Geneva so far?*

If you love history, language and train trips as much as I do, there is no doubt Switzerland is your destination.

I am fascinated by Swiss history because it is so unique. It is also interesting that each canton has a high autonomy but is still well governed, which makes the country one of the safest and most stable in Europe.

Switzerland is the second multilingual country I have lived in, Canada being the first. When I turn on the TV, I can listen to many different languages. I could even find a few



The logo of the [Japan Standards Association](#)

programs in Japanese, which you could never expect if you came to Japan as a foreigner.

I am impressed that the country is ranked first for the number of train trips in Europe far ahead of any other countries (72 times in 2018 according to the [LITRA](#)).

I see why Swiss public transportation is convenient, clean and mostly on time. Japan has a similar reputation, but spectacular Swiss landscapes from the windows are special for me.

In fact, it is challenging to describe Geneva because there are so many different faces to it, more often than not these aspects are opposite to each other. Geneva is a city but it's not far from nature, it's influenced by French culture but it's also international. I still have so much to learn about this city, but I am certain Geneva is like no other city in the world.

## A brief introduction to Shochu

Japanese food specialties are appreciated all around the world and this is also true for beverages.

We have already reported about the subtleties and the elaborate taste of sake. Today, we would like to briefly introduce you to shochu.

Unlike sake, which is a brewed beverage (actually closer to beer than wine), shochu is a distilled beverage. Typical shochu contains 25% of alcohol but the level can go up to 45%. It can be distilled from rice, sweet potatoes, cereals, brown sugar and so on.

Produced on the southern island of Kyushu, the process is always the same; only the main ingredient changes. A rice-based must is steamed and seeded with the “koji”, the same fungus used for soy sauce or sake. The must is then mixed with water, yeast and the main ingredient. The mixture will then be fermented and distilled.

Korui shochu is a multiple distilled

shochu for which a special machine is necessary. Korui is diluted for sale to contain less than 36% of alcohol.

Honkaku shochu is a singly distilled shochu. It catches all the taste from the main ingredient and must contain less than 45% of alcohol.

In its effort to promote Japanese

food and beverage specialties, JET-RO will organize a tasting event on August 29th in Geneva.

The event will take place in the temporary “Aux Milles Pins” space on the 1st floor of the Brachard shop, 10 rue de la Corraterie.

More details can be found on the [website](#).



Great Shochu from [Kokuto Shochu Asahi Distillery](#) and [Taikai Shuzo](#)

活動

ACTIVITY

## A good second quarter and a solid economic perspective for 2019

This summer, the Cabinet office has published both the figures for the 2019 second quarter (April-June) and the mid-year economic forecast for the fiscal year 2019 (April 2019-March 2020).

In 2019's Q1, the GDP growth was mostly the result of the fast decreasing imports rather than an actual increase of consumption or exports.

This uncommon situation has not

continued for the Q2, during which the Japanese economy enjoyed a 0.4% expansion thanks to the domestic consumption (+0.7%).

This good news is coherent with the Mid-Year Economic Projection for FY2019, setting a real GDP growth of 0.9%. The inflation should increase to 0.7%. The increase in domestic consumption is good news, considering the current weakness seen in exports over the

last months. The cabinet office warns that risk might come from ongoing trade issues and their impact on the global economy.

The Rugby World Cup 2019 and the Olympic and Paralympic Games 2020 will support the domestic consumptions and boost the already high number of foreign visitors.

[Quarterly Estimates](#)

[Mid-Year Economic Projection](#)

動向

TREND

## Japan to be the first partner country for the IFA/Next

革新

INNOVATION

The Internationale Funkausstellung Berlin (IFA) is one of the world's most important trade fairs for consumer electronics, taking place every year in Berlin in early September (6-11 this year).

In 2019, Japan will be the first partner country for IFA/NEXT, the special side event dedicated to start-ups.

It will result in an increased presence of Japanese companies in this year's edition. Supported by the METI, the companies selected to be part of the Japanese Pavilion are all working on improving user interfaces through which any and all users, including the elderly, are able to enjoy benefits related to digital technologies. It will also encourage companies to take part in global

exhibitions to win overseas markets and cultivate new businesses by conveying Japanese innovations to the rest of the world.

The twenty start-ups, including companies selected through the J-Startups program, cover a wide

area of application and represent Japanese innovation, technology and know-how.

The list of the start-ups is available [here](#).

[Source](#) on METI's Website  
[IFA/NEXT](#)



Picture from the Press Conference

## Agenda

日程

AGENDA

- ✓ August 29: Shochu tasting event  
Aux Mille Pins c/o [Brachard](#), 10 rue de la Corraterie, Geneva, 1st floor. 17:00-20:00.  
Free of charge, no registration needed. Download the invitation [here](#)
- ✓ September 29: Fête Japonaise  
The 9th edition of the Fête Japonaise will take place on September 29 in Carouge. [Details](#)

JETRO is a government-related organization that works to promote mutual trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world. Originally established in 1958 to promote Japanese exports abroad, JETRO's core focus in the 21st century has shifted toward promoting foreign direct investment into Japan and helping small to medium size Japanese firms maximize their global export potential.

The JETRO Switzerland Newsletter can also be viewed and/or downloaded online:  
<http://www.jetro.go.jp/switzerland/newsletter>

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