

**Remarks by Jota Yamamoto, Ambassador of Japan in Finland,
November 28, 2016, at Finnish-Japanese Chamber of Commerce, FJCC, Helsinki**

Mr. Chairman, Pitkänen-san, and dear colleagues,

It is my great pleasure to cosponsor this occasion with FJCC to look to the current circumstances and elaborate the common perspectives.

Nowadays a very alarming statement is fashionable. Public media referred to many risks, worries and uncertainties: Brexit, increasing isolationism, extremism and chauvinism, anti-globalization, and, though I take a different view, the recent Presidential election of the States is sometimes described as a symbol of upcoming danger.

Is it actually the case? If the answer is yes, we have to take action right away to mitigate any negative impacts. If the answer is not, still we have to take action to enhance any positive values for a sound and prosperous world. In both cases, action is necessary, and to identify actions to take, a clearer perspective is necessary.

I like the choice of topics today, which is very relevant. Yukita-san from JETRO London will suggest us how to see the current business environment of the European market, how to see its possible future, and how to locate Japan-Europe economic relationship.

Brexit is a heated agenda. But if we are trapped with minute details on the technical modality of Brexit, we may perhaps get lost and give the people a good excuse not to take action until and unless the UK makes clear the minute details of decoupling.

But the overall picture should be very simple. Mutually benefitting business practice shall never be sacrificed without **pragmatic arrangement**, and a **basic principle of free trade** shall never be challenged. That is the basic tenet of the **message of Japan as addressed to the EU and the UK** after the referendum.

Before asking who killed Robin, people inside and outside Europe may wish to take action, not to kill Robin and to protect free trade systems. Japan is now accelerating the **ratification process of TPP**. Do you think it makes no sense as the States may drop out of TPP? I would say, that is why it is all the more important for other countries to ratify TPP now, not to let Americans kill TPP and consequently damage the value of free trade. (Turn over page)

On European front, Japan makes its best efforts to accelerate negotiations of **Economic Partnership Agreement between Japan and the EU**. It is important to reach basic agreement by the end of this year. Japan is certainly very attentive of the destiny of **TTIP** on Trans-Atlantic front as well.

To talk about these issues, **Finland** is a fitting partner to talk with. As a **country formulating the most critical part of European technological and commercial supply chain**, Finland is one of the best masterminds and possibly largest beneficiaries of the single market. The people of Finland are very frank on Brexit and sticky to basics: the relevance of free trade concept. The active commitment of Finland to Japan-EU FTA is encouraging as well.

As ambassador, I am now getting into my eighth month in Finland, and through conversations with hosting people like FJCC and visiting people like the recent delegation of Keidanren, now gradually discovering the unique characteristic of the Finnish people: a positive and courageous, sometimes very ambitious attitude to better-tuning of social systems, that is.

“Systematized approach towards digital ecosystem” is a good example. Focus is not upon the innovation of individual technologies. How to apply it to realities and social needs: that is the objective. Thus how to better streamline social networking with the help of efficient data processing: that is the approach.

In Finland, innovation, incubation and business start-up, those are no more private affairs, but the common social agenda. Thus we see in this country the **beautifully organized cooperation among industry, academics and government**. There may be a lot of stimulants in Japan-Finland partnership as learning more and benefitting more from mutual orientations.

SLUSH is a good example of what I said, and is a **typically Finnish made event**. This year, the turn-out of 15000 is expected, and I congratulate and appreciate SLUSH-ASIA for its continued engagement. Its representative Matsuzaki-san is very kind to join us today to share her cutting-edge experience. It will surely facilitate identifying the dynamism of Japan-Finland and Japan-Europe collaborations in this fluctuating age. (end of remarks)