

I thank Mr. Viitanen, MC of this exciting occasion, and I thank Mr. Sakaguchi of JETRO London and Mr. Suomi of Finpro for their timely initiative making this event possible. I would also like to thank you all, as your attendance will surely enhance the values of this gathering.

First of all, I would like refer, with deep sorrow, to the passing away of H.E. Mr. Mauno Koivisto. He was one of frontrunners in cultivating dynamism of Japan-Finland friendship. I herewith express, on behalf of the Government and people of Japan, the sense of condolences, and I would like to salute H.E. the late Mr. President Mauno Koivisto.

Minä olen Yamamoto, japani suurlähettiläs Suomessa. These are almost all vocabularies of my Finnish language. But still, I can survive, and rather, enjoy nice human communications with Finnish friends. Many of you easily manage English. But this is not the point.

Your people are perhaps the genius at taking the essence of communication. You are surely the genius at delivering clear & concise message. You are therefore the genius at creating business environment, nicely fitting to the Japanese business practice. Not linguistic communication alone, but human communication matters much more.

Japan keeps increased attention to business in Finland, business with Finland. Many business delegations have come from Japan for recent months. Keidanren, Kansai Association of Corporate Executives, Kyushu Economic Federation are just a few examples. Their typical agenda is the high potential of Finland in ICT and advanced technologies, but another equally impressive point is the wisdom of Finland in masterminding European supply chains.

We now start learning it from Finnish partners. Investment by Fujitsu in ICT controlled horticulture is a good example, and the recent move of Mitsubishi Materials into copper processing at Pori is another fitting example.

We are lucky, as our political leaders, President Niinistö and Prime Minister Abe, have already given us a charming phrase to describe the future of Japan-Finland economic partnership: from “gateway” to “basecamp”, that is. For many Japanese companies, Finland as basecamp has already become a part of the reality.

I believe that Japan is able to function as basecamp for you as well, thus we have this seminar today. The question is how Japan is able to offer you practical & enduring benefits?

Geography and trade & logistical positioning clearly suggest that Japan may be a basecamp for your business deployment into Asia, Asia-Pacific and America. With or without TPP, Japan has already taken irreversible steps toward its market access of the highest possible standard.

Japan may perhaps provide you with a functional basecamp as well, a basecamp to jump into a new frontier of technological research, development & testing, or jump into a varied marketing to fit very minutely diversified needs. Japan's political stability and steady upturn of economy remains a safety net.

To enhance mutual benefits, the early conclusion of Japan-EU EPA is necessary. If taking more time, experts in Brussels will be more joyfully hamper the negotiations. Political will of EU member countries should be given the utmost importance, and the voices of you, business people should be a driving force.

This year we celebrate Suomi 100 yhdessä. 2019 will mark Japani Suomi 100. 2020 is the year of Tokyo Olympic & Paralympic Games. To these celebratory years, Japan would like to add one more, 2025 Expo in Osaka. This is pending on voting by countries, and there will be a hard competition between Osaka and Paris. Though Paris is a tough competitor, Osaka will definitely offer you a lot of business chances outside Europe. It will offer you a basecamp in reality. I would like to count upon your precious support.

To celebrate Suomi 100, the long-awaited Japanese-Finnish dictionary was published this year. As always said in Finland, ties between Japan & Finland are very solid, as both countries signify the value of human connections. As always said in the world, language is the very basic for any human connections.

Thus it is all the more regrettable that Aalto University has closed its long-standing and renowned Japanese language course. Its immediate resumption may be difficult. I will keep close eyes, as Aalto University itself may wish to avoid any dangerous implication of decreased attention to Japan.

Once again, I would like to thank today's presentators, moderators, panelists, good audience, and all the people preparing, joining and cooperating with this seminar. I believe that it will provide you with a good & fruitful opportunity of stock-taking and networking.

My Embassy in Helsinki will keep acting as your information switch board, and Ambassador Siukosaari's office in Tokyo will do the same. Let us work together, and I wish you a very fruitful afternoon.