

Remarks by HE Ambassador Jota Yamamoto of Japan for the Cherry Blossom Trees Planting at the Parliament Annex on 17 May 2018

Her Excellency Madame Speaker, Honorable members of the Parliament, Honorable Mayor of Helsinki, H.E. Mr. Ambassador & Distinguished Guests,

I would like to thank you all for giving me such privileged occasion. This heartwarming atmosphere represents the very Finnish hospitality, and my special appreciation goes to arrangement made by Madame Paavola, Madame Kuusinen, Mr. Rauhio and all the staff of the Parliament, and to a generous support and understanding from the City of Helsinki.

For the past years, H.E. Ambassador Siukosaari and I have tried best efforts to enhance the mutual visits of importance between Japan and Finland. Most recently, it has been highlighted by the visit of Madame Speaker to Japan in March as followed by the visit of Honorable Jan Vapaavuori, Mayor of Helsinki. I would like to thank Madame Speaker and Mr. Mayor for their considerate attention to my country Japan and to my region East Asia.

From Japan, Defense Minister Mr. Onodera came to Finland two weeks ago to see Mr. President Niinistö and Dr. Minister Niinistö. I am proud of the current progress, and Ambassador Siukosaari and I can be very optimistic that the relationship of the two countries may fully and more fully be blooming for years to come.

Madame Speaker,

For the past few days, we have witnessed cherry blossoms to bloom. Some of those are already gone away. Mr. Norio Tomida, renowned figure of the local community, and his friends have planted cherry blossom trees in many places of Helsinki since many years ago, and now, the color of cherry blossoms has been integral part of the landscape of the city. On the upcoming Saturday, there will be a cherry blossom festivity in Roihuvuori Park.

To celebrate Suomi 100 last year, Japan gifted cherry blossom trees, as they bless the passage of years and eternity. And this year, we are able to plant these saplings this important year of 2018.

The Japan Sakura Foundation is the donor organization, and its President R.H. Susumu Hasumi addressed his message to Madame Speaker. He said, among others:

“The Foundation is dignified to present Sakura trees and to celebrate the renovation of the Parliamentary house, and I believe that this may further enhance Japan-Finland friendship. I wish that these Sakura trees bloom at the Eduskunta, and add further colors to the prosperity of Finland.”

Madame Speaker,

We are today able to plant these saplings this important year of 2018. Japan tries to best understand the implications of 2018. This is Suomi 100+1 to celebrate, and the centennial of civil war to remind us of the value of today's unity and integrity of the people of Finland.

In such context, I would like to identify the relevance of today's event, and the relevance of Japan's cherry blossom trees as planted around the Finnish Parliament. In such context, I would like to keep eyes upon the growth of these young saplings.

Next year marks Japani-Suomi 100 which will give us another occasion to commemorate, and the very date to establish diplomatic relations was May 24, 1919. I hope that we can celebrate its 100 years anniversary together in May next year, and I hope, by that time, these cherry blossom trees will be a bit grown up and a bit more integrated with your landscape.