

Remarks by HE Ambassador Yamamoto on the occasion of reception on-board JS KASHIMA on 17 August 2018

It is my great honor to cohost this occasion with RADM Izumi, Commander of Japan Training Squadron. This is the revisit of Squadron to Helsinki and its previous visit gets back to 2013, five years ago.

In 2013, when JS Kashima came to Helsinki, I also was here from Tokyo as I accompanied my Defense Minister Mr. Onodera who flew to Helsinki and welcomed JS Kashima himself. It was the first visit as ever of Japan's training squadron to Finland. It was my first personal experience on Helsinki as well.

Thus it is all the more impressive to me. For the past five years, many things have changed. Japan-Finland relationship is no exception, and we have together made progress in the right direction. Our strategic partnership has now been clearly identified, and is rapidly enhanced.

Unfortunately I do not have my defense minister today, but quite fortunately Defense Minister Mr. Onodera already revisited Helsinki in May this year. His meeting with Defence Minister HE Dr. Niinistö as well as his courtesy call to the President of the Republic HE Mr. Niinistö, were both very substantive, sharing the common interpretation on the common agenda. We can truly be proud of such development.

This time, we welcomed two vessels, familiar JS Kashima and new face JS Makinami, who came to Finland to celebrate the 100 years anniversary of Navy as well as Defence Forces of Finland. This time, we welcomed as many as 580 cadets and crew. As our partnership further grows, our exchange will likewise be accelerated. I believe that many of these cadets and crew will soon make pitkästä aikaa contacts with their Finnish counterparts. Next year marks Japani Suomi 100 by lucky coincidence.

Today, we have as a kind of surprise the beautiful voice to join us, members of NHK Tokyo Children's Chorus. I really appreciate their attendance to bless us with chorus from Tokyo, chorus with people in Finland.

Last and not the least, I would like to thank all the people of all the Finnish authorities for their dedication and hospitality to accommodate the training squadron. I hope you enjoy this typical, traditional and world-renowned "Maritime Self-Defense Forces styled festivity". I wish you a very good evening.