

Remarks by HE Ambassador Yamamoto on the occasion of EDUCA at Messukeskus on 25 January 2018

Thank you for giving me this precious chance to listen to & enjoy your vivid discussion. Though I didn't catch the content of discussion as I don't understand the Finnish language, I could still feel and was impressed at the energy & atmosphere. The active exchange of mutual orientations, that is perhaps the very essence of the Finnish education. The concept of your "school on the move" is now quite famous in my country. Even without athletic moves, your discussion was very moving, indeed.

You are perhaps bit wondering who I am, and why I am joining you. My name is Yamamoto, I am the ambassador of Japan. I know you are now waiting for lunch, perhaps I shall be brief, but I may not be so brief, because I am here as I was eager to share something with you.

Something No. 1. This year marks Japani-Suomi 100, and Japan is among 6 countries to celebrate centenary with Finland. I am proud to share the common voices of how much we have cherished partnership with Finland for the past 100 years. The common agenda is how to pass this precious heritage to the next upcoming 100 years. I believe that you, people educating people, and people being educated, will give me a lot of hints on how to make it possible.

Thus I really appreciate & thank Mr. Luukkainen & his Trade Union of Education to give me this marvelous opportunity. I really appreciate & thank Minister Mme. Grahn-Laasonen & her Ministry of Education & Culture, DG Mr. Heinonen & his National Agency for Education, for always extending your kind help & navigation to me. Perttu-san, Jutta-san, Roosa-san, Aleksi-san & all the colleagues around this stage, and many people tweeting from inside, outside Messukeskus, I really appreciate your contribution.

I have stayed in Finland for 2.5 years, and am now able to clearly identify the similarity & affinity between Japan & Finland. This similarity & affinity has long been cherished by enormous number of face-to-face human contacts, human communications & human networking. Thus we see no difficulties to build upon these human connections and expand the practical & mutual benefits in many areas as business, defense & security, academic or cultural collaborations and so on. HE President Mr. Niinistö & HE Prime Minister Mr. Abe call it the strategic partnership. Relationship between our two countries is one of the best blessed bilateral relationships.

My constant agenda is how to keep, promote and reproduce the precious & necessary human connections of the two nations, particularly among young generations. Overall environment is more & more encouraging. Next month, for example, Japan-EU EPA will enter into force. Japan enhances its trust upon Finland as the effective business partner not only in a bilateral context but in the broader context of the entire Europe & Asia. Now more than 200 Japanese companies have stepped into Finland, and the number is simply increasing. Many of those are now enhancing contacts to university & college students for recruitment, internship, collaborations and so on.

How to encourage young generations to identify their social mission, that is your important agenda, and likewise in Japan, that is pressing agenda. Tokyo-based NGO USNOVA noticed our similarities of approach, and last week organized the international youth forum for 90 Japanese & Finnish youths to attend. They discussed action plans against child poverty, and achieved a striking success.

We have a lot of heartwarming human networks. Long-standing efforts of Rajamäki School and the IPPO Project have made possible the introduction of Japanese to optional foreign languages at the upper secondary schools. Almost in response, Tokyo-based Japan-Finland Society compiled the first full-fledge Japanese-Finnish dictionary now available for on-line purchase. Language is important, face-to-face contact is important, and after all, the exchange of responses of good will is most important.

Something No. 2 which I was eager to share with you is the mini-encyclopedia of Japan. You see your copies over there for free-distribution. This encyclopedia is written in easy Finnish language to better promote the understanding with Japan among children and young people in Finland. Perhaps you easily understand why this is relevant to Japani-Suomi 100, why this is relevant to you & EDUCA. Most certainly, this encyclopedia will help us to nourish human connections towards future between our two countries.

I know that the turnout to EDUCA is nearly 18000, but today I only have 100 copies. I am sorry, first come, first served should apply. This encyclopedia is compiled by the group of Japanese volunteers, and they desire to reach as many children and young people as possible. How to coordinate delivery and how to better ensure the finance remains a tough agenda. If some of you kindly extend your help & wisdom, it will be appreciated. More challenges will anyway further strengthen human collaborations. This is my belief, particularly applicable to Japan and Finland, the best blessed bilateral relationship. I wish for the success of EDUCA, and wish you all a very good afternoon.