

**Remarks by Ambassador Yamamoto in the opening of the exhibition  
“Bird Photographs by Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado”  
at the National Archives of Finland, 1 April 2019**

Excellencies, Ambassador Vahlqvist though we are missing him physically today but psychologically and on the screen, he is with us, Ambassador & Madame Siukosaari, Ambassador Heimonen, Dr. Nuorteva and distinguished guests,

I have some breaking news I like to share with you. Japan will have the new Emperor with a new imperial era name from next month, and how to call the new era was just decided and announced today. That is “Reiwa“.

Thus it is my great pleasure to address you all on this wonderful afternoon, with the image of the new era as we call “Reiwa“, celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the diplomatic relations between Japan and Finland, and enjoy Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado’s photography, which I am very happy to see exhibited here today at the National Archives of Finland.

I would like to thank Dr. Nuorteva, Ambassador Vahlqvist, the leadership of the Scandinavian Japan Sasakawa Foundation, the National Archives & and its team and everyone who was involved in making today’s event, and this exhibition, possible.

As Her Imperial Highness conveyed to us in her greeting, the people of Finland and Japan have much in common, such as the pursuit of academic excellence and innovation, and the love of clear and simple design.

The respect for nature noted by Dr. Nuorteva, too, is something very important in both our cultures. It is these many commonalities shared by our peoples upon which the long and continuing friendship of our nations is founded. They are at the heart of the warm relations and human connections that our predecessors have built during the past 100 years.

One of these predecessors was Maestro Akeo Watanabe, founder and original resident conductor of the Japan Philharmonic Orchestra. Watanabe's mother was Finnish, and he spent his formative childhood years in Finland. Tomorrow his orchestra will be conducted by Maestro Inkinen when it performs at Musiikkitalo. Finland will also be one of the first destinations for Their Imperial Highnesses Prince and Princess Akishino for their tour abroad this summer. These are certainly wonderful examples of the cultural and human bonds between our nations.

The relationship between our two countries has developed beyond simple bilateral relations, becoming a strategic partnership connecting Europe and East Asia. With both countries playing key roles in these regions, we are building on a firm foundation of trust to develop mutually beneficial relationships in many fields including security, business and culture. The Strategic Partnership Agreement and the Economic Partnership Agreement between Japan & the EU provide an excellent backdrop for this effort.

Recent accomplishments include the visits of Minister of Defence Dr. Niinistö and Minister of Economic Affairs Mr. Lintilä to Japan in February, as well as the signing of memorandums on defence cooperation on the one hand, and on cooperation between the Japan External Trade Organization and Business Finland on the other.

The stage is set for both sides to seek real benefits. Now we must proceed with further concrete efforts. The increasing number of Japanese companies now based in Finland, and the growing number of flights to East Asia by Finnair & Japan Airlines, provide some encouraging and inspiring examples.

I trust that the relationship between Japan and Finland will continue to grow as both a strong pragmatic partnership, and as a warm and amicable friendship between the people of our nations. I hope that this exhibition will provide us with an opportunity to not only reflect upon the past 100 years, but also to look towards the exciting possibilities that lay ahead of us as we enter the *next* 100 years of friendship between Japan and Finland.

Thank you. I hope you have a very pleasant afternoon with us today.