

**Remarks by H.E. Takashi Murata,  
Ambassador of Japan to Finland,  
“Japan and Finland Centennial Anniversary of  
Diplomatic Relations Kendo Seminar” on 16 August**

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am Takashi Murata, Ambassador of Japan, who came to Finland to assume the duty this April. I sincerely congratulate on the opening of “Japan and Finland Centennial Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations Kendo Seminar”.

As a part of Projects for Sports Diplomacy that the government of Japan has been advancing, a Japanese delegation headed by Mr. Funaki, Director of Zen Nihon Kendo Renmei, is welcomed to Finland this time. I'd like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Finnish Kendo Association and all of those concerned for their endeavors to help organize this program.

I learned there are over 30 kendo clubs and approximately 500 people are enjoying kendo in Finland. 350 people out of them are dan holders.

Since its foundation in 1986, Finnish Kendo Association has been tirelessly pursuing kendo, a Japanese traditional martial art, and widely spreading its attraction, which has made the long-term and deep-rooted popularity of kendo here and a large number of enthusiastic kendokas. We cannot fail to mention the great dedication by a lot of kendo coaches dispatched to Finland from Zen Nihon Kendo Renmei since the foundation of Finnish Kendo Association, starting with Mr. Daihachiro Uematsu, who had served as a defense attaché for Embassy of Japan in Finland.

Kendo reminds me of Finnish “Sisu”, the spirit of acting resiliently and comfortably in the face of adversity. I believe there is an affinity between “Sisu” and the philosophy of kendo, which aims to cultivate one’s mind and self-discipline.

Based on this affinity, the predecessors of both countries in various fields including culture and sports have been fostering our mutual understanding and solid relationship of trust, which lay the foundation of our centenary-long friendship.

The program this time includes various interactions such as kendo practices at some universities, lunch hosted by a friendship society, starting with this seminar. These are all great initiatives to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the diplomatic relations. I sincerely hope through the program more and more people contemplate how the next 100 years might look like for Japan and Finland, deeply appreciating the centenary significance.

Lastly, but not least, sauna after practices is also an ideal place for sports diplomacy. Please enjoy sauna, working up a good sweat!

Thank you. Kiitos paljon.