

**Remarks by H.E. Takashi Murata,  
Ambassador of Japan to Finland,  
“Noh Event” on 18 September**

Excellencies,

ladies and gentlemen,

I am sincerely pleased to hold the Noh event to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Finland. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Ko Lo Sha as the co-host of this event, represented by Mr. Kazuya Urata, Representative Director and Mr. Gotaro Ogawa, Adviser for Ko Lo Sha. My deep appreciation also goes to Sakurama-Group led by Master Ujin Sakurama, the 21st generation of Sakurama Family as well as all of those concerned for their endeavors to make this event possible.

This year marks the centennial of diplomatic relations between Japan and Finland. The relationship of our two countries has remarkably developed in recent years. Due to 41 direct flights per week, both countries have been frequented by approximately 150,000 Japanese and Finnish people in total annually.

Recent accomplishments include an agreement in principle of the Social Security Agreement between both countries in January, signing of memorandums on defence cooperation and on cooperation between the Japan External Trade Organization and Business Finland in February. Ties of both countries have been more and more strengthened in the fields of politics, business, security, culture, arts and others.

Furthermore, now our relations have transcended its bilateral frame to a strategic partnership connecting Europe and Asia. This is well demonstrated by the conclusions of the Strategic Partnership Agreement as well as the Economic Partnership Agreement between Japan and the EU in February and July last year, respectively.

The cornerstone of the friendly relations between Japan and Finland over the past hundred years lies in human-to-human connections as well as mutual understanding and deep trust through such connections cherished in various fields. This is highlighted and symbolized by the official visit by Their Imperial Highness Crown Prince and Crown Princess to Finland in July this year.

Our Embassy will do our part so that both countries can further develop as the linchpins of Europe and Asia by deepening such a centennial-long solid relationship of trust.

Noh performances by Sakurama Group have been held in more than 20 countries abroad and received a favorable reputation. This is the first time for them to perform in Finland.

While observing the traditional style of Noh lasting over 600 years, Sakurama Group has been creating new type of Noh performances, depending on various themes. I learned they once performed a Noh on the theme of Hamlet, a famous Shakespearean play. They have been evolving their Noh arts by constantly bringing innovation to their works while inheriting a profound tradition.

Today's Noh performances will surely provide a lot of inspiration with us as we head into the new century of Japan-Finland relations and imagine what that will be like.

Thank you. Kiitos paljon.

(End)