

**Remarks by H.E. Takashi Murata,
Ambassador of Japan to Finland,
“Signing Ceremony of Social Security Agreement”
on 23 September**

Her Excellency Minister Aino-Kaisa Pekonen,

Distinguished guests,

I am highly delighted and honored to be at this momentous occasion of signing ceremony of the Social Security Agreement between Japan and the Republic of Finland today.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation and sincere respect to Minister Pekonen, all the staff of Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and everyone concerned for their long-term dedication and hard work to this landmark agreement since the first round of negotiations seven years ago.

Today’s signing ceremony is truly timely and symbolic as this year marks the centenary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Finland. The cornerstone of the friendly relations between both countries 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 agreement will further facilitate people-to-people and economic exchanges between both countries by reducing the burden imposed on companies and employees of both countries. For example, now businesses no longer need to pay social security contributions for the benefits in both countries, meaning they can avoid 'double' social security contributions.

Due to 41 direct flights per week, Japan and Finland have been frequented by approximately 150,000 people of both countries in total annually. In addition, currently, around 2,000 Japanese are living in Finland while 800 Finns are living in Japan.

I am very much confident and look forward to seeing the good result which this agreement will bring for both Japanese and Finnish companies and employees from now on.

Back in March 2016, Prime Minister Abe and President Niinistö concluded the Joint Statement on the Strategic Partnership between Japan and Finland. In this statement, the two leaders underlined the

importance of concluding the intergovernmental negotiations on a Social Security Agreement at the earliest possible time.

Today's ceremony is also highly significant in being able to follow up such a summit-level agreement.

Finally, once again, allow me to reiterate my sincere gratitude to everyone involved for making this landmark agreement possible in this centenary year.

I strongly believe that this new agreement will further tighten and widen our bilateral friendly relationship as we head into the next centenary.

Thank you. Kiitos paljon.

(End)