

**Opening Remarks by  
Counsellor Mr. Ryoji Iwama, Deputy Chief of Mission of Embassy of Japan at  
Seminars on ONSEN at Helsinki on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019 at Helsinki**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Evening. Thank you very much for your attending this seminar on “Onsen”, Japanese traditional hot spring baths. My name is Ryoji Iwama, Deputy Chief of Mission of Embassy of Japan. I have the honor to have an opportunity to welcome all of you here on behalf of the Embassy.

This evening, we welcome Ms. Noriko SEINO, Vice Landlady of one of traditional Japanese Guesthouse, Onsen Ryokan, who came all the way from Japan for this evening. She was born in Niigata prefecture in Japan and studied tourism management in Coventry University in UK. Now she runs and manages her ONSEN RYOKAN named Seikokan, one of the oldest Onsen Ryokans, which was established in 1707 in Niigata, Japan.

Niigata prefecture is located in almost the geographical center of the Japanese archipelago on the coast of Sea of Japan, where produces delicious rice and vegetable on the land and fresh fish and seafood from sea. Niigata is also famous for its great variety of rich SAKE.

In this seminar, Ms. SEINO will discuss about OMOTENASHI, Japanese hospitality, focusing on services and facilities with which ONSEN RYOKANs provide. We can say that ONSEN RYOKAN are an opportunity to explore the traditional Japanese lifestyle and hospitality, incorporating elements such as tatami floors, futon beds, local cuisine and relax time with ONSEN. ONSEN is like Sauna in Japan where you feel relaxed physically and mentally by being naked but soaking in hot spring water instead of hot steamed air.

This year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Finland. To celebrate our relations, Their Imperial Highness the Crown Prince and Princesses of Japan visited Finland last July. The cornerstone of the friendly relations between the both countries over the past hundred years lies in human-to-human connections cherished by our predecessors based on various commonalities in cultures.

In these days, Japan and Finland are connected by 41 direct flights per week which take only 9 hours. In accordance with the latest statistics, about 110 thousand Japanese yearly visit Finland while about 30 thousand Finns visit Japan. In order to further enhance human-to-human connections between the peoples of the both countries for the next 100 years, I hope more and more Finnish people will visit Japan, exploring authentic Japanese ONSEN culture and heartfelt Japanese RYOKAN hospitality after this seminar.

Now, I wish to invite Ms. Seino to speak. Thank you.