

**Remarks by H.E. MURATA Takashi,
Ambassador of Japan to Finland,
Mochi Party on 12 January 2020**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Happy New Year. I am truly delighted to celebrate the opening of the New Year with everyone here on the occasion of mochi party, which is well-known Japanese tradition in celebrating a new year.

First, I would like to express my deep appreciation to Marketta Forsell, Chair of the Finnish-Japanese Society, and all the others concerned for organizing this event.

Today not only mochi party, but also some other events will be performed. We can enjoy Wadaiko, Japanese drum, played by Mr. SATOU Kensaku, a renowned Wadaiko player, who came to Finland from Japan. The demonstration of Aikido, one of the Japanese martial arts, and Ikebana, flower arrangement, workshop are also planned.

I feel very grateful to see various Japanese cultures have been widely accepted and spreading here in Finland.

Last year marked the centenary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Finland. So many commemorative events were held in both countries to celebrate it.

This year marks the opening of new century of our diplomatic relations. On top of this, Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be held in summer for the first time in 56 years. This offers Finnish people a significant occasion to realize how Japan has been recovering from the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 as well to enjoy as various Japanese attractions.

As you may know, in Japan, from ancient times it is believed that Toshigami, the God of incoming year, comes to us at the first day of the year and energizes us. This God is believed to be present in Kagami Mochi, two layers of round rice cakes made by pouding mocha with a mandarin on top, and used as an offering to the deity. We share and eat Kagami Mochi to gain the power of the God.

I hope everyone here can make this meaningful year for Japan and Finland fruitful and prosperous by eating a lot of mochi, such an auspicious food, and regaining your strength.

Thank you.