

**Address by H.E. Ambassador MURATA Takashi  
at Encouragement Ceremony for Finnish Athletes to  
Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games  
on 17 June 2021**

Ms. Leena Paavolainen, Olympic Team Finland's Deputy Chief of Mission, Mr. Mika Vakkuri, Paralympic Team Finland's Deputy Chief of Mission,

Welcome to my residence. Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games that we have been waiting for as long as four plus one years are just around the corner.

As I learn that Finnish team will leave for Saga Prefecture, Fukuoka Prefecture and Hokkaido for training camps early next month, I would like to hold Encouragement Ceremony today. I wish I could invite all the Finnish athletes to this ceremony. However, due to the COVID-19 situation, I have decided to organize this ceremony on a small-scale with only limited people concerned.

First of all, allow me to extend my profound respect for all the Finnish athletes who have successfully obtained the qualifications for Tokyo Games in spite of various constraint in daily practices or trainings caused by the pandemic. My deepest appreciation also goes to the members of Finnish Olympic Committee and Finnish Paralympic Committee, and all of those concerned who have dedicated themselves to supporting the Finnish athletes.

While the qualification process is still ongoing, I have heard that 27 Finnish athletes to Olympic Game have been selected so far including Ms. Satu Mäkelä-Nummela, a gold medalist in shooting in Beijing Olympic Game and Ms. Tuuli Petäjä-Sirén, a silver medalist in windsurfing in London Olympic Game. As for Paralympic Game, 8 Finnish athletes have been selected including Mr. Leo-Pekka Tähti, a five-time gold medalist.

The upcoming another Tokyo Games since the last one held half a century ago are very special ones. Tokyo Games that will be held in the midst of the COVID-19 global challenge are not only sports festivals but also irreplaceable occasions to bring mutual assistance, solidarity and hope, through sports, back to our international society. It is "United by Emotion", the motto of Tokyo Games, that we desire now.

I sincerely wish that every Finnish athlete will do their best and achieve

great success, and thereby give people in the world including Finland a great deal of emotion, redoubled courage and hope in a safe and secure manner as a symbol of global unity in overcoming the COVID-19.

Tsemppiä ja onnea matkaan!

(End)