

**Address by Counsellor MIYAZAKI Kazumasa
at the Opening of Finnish and Japanese Friendship
Travelling Photo Exhibition on 7 June**

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, Good afternoon.

I am Counsellor MIYAZAKI Kazumasa from the Embassy of Japan in Finland. Allow me to express my sincere appreciation for your joining the opening of this photo exhibition. I would like to thank Mr. Jukka Kosonen, Chair of Association of Finnish Camera Clubs, Ms. Anu Kasnio, Museum Director of Kouvola Art Museum, Ms. Anne Käki, Head of Connections for the City of Kouvola, and Ms. Marjo Seki, Friend of Japan, for making this exhibition possible here in Kouvola. Thank you.

It is my first time to visit Kouvola. As Covid-19 situation has calmed down, I am very happy to be able to meet you all. As the Finnish and Japanese Friendship Photo Exhibition travels around Finland, the friendship between our countries is not limited only to the metropolitan area, but can be found in many places and since a very long time ago. One remarkable example of this friendship is the friendship between Erik Laxman and Daikokuya Kodayu which dates back to over 200 years ago.

In 1792, thanks to tremendous support by Erik Laxman, a Finnish naturalist, Daikokuya Kodayu, a Japanese sailor whose ship was wrecked and drifted to Siberia, successfully returned to Japan. This year 2022 marks the 230th anniversary of Kodayu's return home.

In order to commemorate such warm friendship, our Embassy marks this year as "Finnish Japanese Friendship Year 2022". We have been preparing this photo exhibition and various other events to add further momentum to the exchanges between our two countries.

As a judge, I took part in the Photo Contest organized to select the successful photos for this exhibition and examined all the 354 photos submitted to the contest. Therefore, I was able to feel how these photos are expressing friendly relationships between Japan and Finland from various points of view. These works offer an excellent opportunity for us to ponder over our ties.

In the midst of Covid-19 and difficult international situation, the friendship between Finnish and Japanese people gives us hope. I also devote myself to making a difference in the relationship that has been cherished by our predecessors over 200 years.

I sincerely hope that as many people as possible will enjoy this great exhibition.