

Address by Amb FUJIMURA Kazuhiro at Special Seminar on Friendship of Erik Laxman and Daikokuya Kodayu – From the Finnish and Japanese encounter to global connection on 15 September

Mr. Mats Löfström, Chairman of the Parliamentary Finnish-Japanese Friendship Group, Dr. Jussi Nuorteva, Former Director-General of National Archives of Finland, Dr. Päivi Happonen, Director-General of National Archives of Finland, All the professors and lecturers, Thank you for your cooperation in organizing "Special Seminar on Friendship of Erik Laxman and Daikokuya Kodayu". オンラインでご参加の北海道大学大橋所長、谷本先生、ササカワ財団の皆様、日本の皆さんはこんにちは。このイベントにご共催・ご協力していただき、ありがとうございます。

I am FUJIMURA Kazuhiro, Ambassador of Japan to Finland. It is a great honor to meet you all.

In 1792, thanks to the tremendous support by **Erik Laxman**, a Finnish natural scientist, **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. Our Embassy marks this year as "**Finnish-Japanese Friendship Year 2022**".

It is said that what I have just mentioned was the first interaction between Japanese and Finnish people in history. To commemorate our warm friendship, the **National Archives of Finland, Hokkaido University**, and **Embassy of Japan** hold this *Special Seminar on the Friendship of Erik Laxman and Daikokuya Kodayu*. Looking back at the exchanges between our two countries up to today, we hope that they will become even more firmly connected and further develop.

In 2019, Japan and Finland celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations. In Friendship Year 2022, we have been organizing various events such as a friendship photo contest and its traveling exhibitions. It is very significant that Prime Minister **Sanna Marin** visited Japan during this Friendship Year, and referred to Japan as a "Trusted Partner". I would like to mention that

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the **Working Holiday Agreement** between the two countries was also signed on the same occasion.

In the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic and with all the difficulties in today's international situation, our bilateral friendship is an irreplaceable hope. I will devote myself to making a difference in the relationship that has been cherished by our predecessors for over 200 years

Today, organizing this seminar by connecting with Japan online is the very testament of the strength of the bond that our predecessors in both countries have established. I sincerely hope that this event will be an excellent opportunity for many people to ponder over the interaction between Japanese and Finnish people so far. Once again, allow me to reiterate my deep appreciation for joining us today. Please enjoy the interesting stories and presentations.

(end)