

Address by Ambassador Fujimura Kazuhiro
at His Majesty the Emperor's Birthday Reception
1 March 2023 at the residence
of the Japanese Ambassador to the Republic of Finland

Excellencies,

Dear friends of Japan,

在留邦人の皆様 (Japanese Residents),

Thank you very much for coming to today's reception in honour of His Majesty the Emperor's birthday.

His Majesty the Emperor of Japan celebrated his 63rd birthday on 23 February.

As the symbol of the State and the unity of the people of Japan, His Majesty devotes himself to his official duties and public activities.

Today, it is my great pleasure to host this reception for the first time in three years.

I arrived in Finland last April.

Since then, the friendly and cooperative relations between Japan and this beautiful country have progressed even further.

In particular, various face-to-face exchanges and events that we had to cancel due to the pandemic have resumed.

About two weeks after my arrival, Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin visited Japan and held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Kishida Fumio.

After that, high-level-political visits have taken place between the two countries, including ones by ministerial and parliamentary delegations.

Furthermore, bilateral exchanges have advanced in a wide variety of fields, such as trade and investment, science and technology, art and culture, and the Working Holiday Agreement for young people.

In the light of the current international situation, exchange and cooperation on defence and security is particularly noteworthy for our country, which is working toward a 'free and open Indo-Pacific'.

I would like to thank you all here for your cooperation to these developments in the relations between Japan and Finland.

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Also, I would like to express my special gratitude to the Japanese citizens living in Finland and to the Japanese companies doing business in Finland.

Thank you very much.

Finally, please allow me to mention the word 'trust'.

In Tokyo, the Finnish Prime Minister called the relationship with Japan a 'trusted partnership'.

Since then, my attention has always been drawn to this word.

Indeed in today's world, the fundamental values such as the rule of law, democracy, freedom and human rights are facing serious challenges.

Last Friday's candlelights at the Senate Square will be long lasting deep in my heart.

At this turning point in history, I wish to go to the right direction in which trust should work as a guidepost for us.

Then on the way down that road, we could see a silver lining there.

Under today's March good day sunshine, I sincerely hope so, as the people of Finland says,

“maaliskuu maan avaa” or “March shows the ground”.

Thank you very much.

I hope you all enjoy your time with Japanese sake and Ukrainian wine.

Let me make a toast: Kippis !