

Address by Ambassador Okada Takashi
at His Majesty the Emperor's Birthday Reception
7 March 2024 at the residence
of the Japanese Ambassador to the Republic of Finland

Speaker of the Parliament, Dr. Halla-aho,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Hyvää iltapäivää

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

His Majesty celebrated his 64th birthday on 23 February. At the press conference held for the occasion, His Majesty referred to the suffering of people around the world, due to natural disasters, climate change, and wars and conflicts. His Majesty emphasized "the importance of the people of the world to work together for a peaceful and sustainable world, to strive to understand and respect each other, and to care for each other".

Finland and Japan have enjoyed long history of friendly relations, based on mutual admiration and respect. And I feel that Finland and Japan, two mature democracies with developed economy and high level of technology, can do more together, not only for the benefit of our two countries, but for the benefit of the global community. I had a privilege of presenting my credentials to President Niinistö, and then attending the inauguration of the New President last week. Having joined the NATO and under the leadership of President Stubb. Finland is entering a new era, I wish to work with you all to lift this bilateral relationship up to a new level. Foreign Minister of Japan, Ms. Kamikawa, visited Finland in January and proposed 4 priority areas for our future cooperation, namely, security and defense, the Arctic region, technology and economic relations, and gender issues including WPS: Women, Peace and Security. I believe those are good starting points.

Today, it is my great pleasure to meet all of you in person. I arrived in Finland this January with my cat but without my wife. My wife is still in Japan but she will join me in Helsinki in the end of this month, I hope. Then, we would like to travel around this beautiful country of forests and lakes, and meet with people in all walks of life.

Once again, thank you very much for your attendance, and for your attention.