

Distinguished guests, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for attending our national day reception.

On 23 of February, His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito turned 65 years old. At the press conference on his birthday, His Majesty mentioned that this year marks the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and that we all need to remind ourselves of the importance of peace and renew our commitment for peace.

For the past 80 years, despite many regional wars and conflicts, the world as a whole enjoyed relative stability. That stability brought economic development and lifted up hundreds of millions of world population from poverty. The international order based on the rule of law was gradually spreading on the face of the globe.

Unfortunately, we may be already in a different era. Russia invaded into Ukraine and Ukrainians are bravely fighting for their independence and freedom. On the other side of the globe in the Indo-Pacific, there are efforts to unilaterally change the status quo by the use of force or by the threat of use of force. Security of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is increasingly inseparable as demonstrated in the war in Ukraine. Nations which share fundamental values need to work together more than ever to protect international order based on the rule of law. We need to continue to work together for fair and sustainable peace in Ukraine.

Finland and Japan enjoy Strategic Partnership based on shared values and interests, and mutual respect. I arrived in Finland January last year, and I have observed steady growth of this partnership. Last year started with the visit by the then Japanese Foreign Minister to Finland, followed by visit to Japan by Defense Minister Antti Häkkänen, and then Science and Culture Minister Sari Multala. In December, Prime Minister Petteri Orpo visited Japan and had a substantial meeting with Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba. Two leaders agreed on promoting cooperation in the security field as well as in cutting-edge science and technology fields. Finland and Japan are negotiating a framework

agreement on transfer of defense equipment and technology. Working with Finnish counterparts, we hope to bring this partnership to a higher level. The Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai will open in about one month time. The Expo can provide opportunities for further exchanges of people and ideas.

Partnership becomes real only through collaboration of individuals on the ground. Today 10 Japanese companies are here. They are on the forefront of partnership between Japan and Finland. Please drop by their booths downstairs to see what kind of interesting works they are pursuing in Finland.

One of them is Central Finland Mobility Foundation, established by Toyota and the city of Jyväskylä. The foundation aims to utilize the power of hydrogen to promote carbon neutrality through sustainable mobility. To demonstrate a use of hydrogen, CEFMOF is offering grilled chicken, “Yakitori,” cooked by hydrogen cooker downstairs. It is said that, as burning hydrogen produces water, chicken grilled by hydrogen will be juicier. Please check it out.

I would also like to mention that the traditional sake brewing was inscribed in the UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list last December. To celebrate, there will be a sake tasting by a sake master, also downstairs.

Thank you once again for attending our national day reception. I wish you an enjoyable afternoon.