
Finland Independence Day Special

More sustainable world after COVID-19

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On Dec. 6, we celebrate Finland's 103rd Independence Day anniversary with mixed emotions. As we approach the end of an annus horribilis, one cannot put pen to paper without mentioning

COVID-19. It is on happy occasions such as Thanksgiving, Independence Day or Christmas that we wish we could forget the pandemic. Alas, that is precisely what we must not do. We must persist with the dull, mundane, but safe habits of washing hands, wearing masks and social distancing.

But even in the middle of a global crisis, we have to remember to lift our gazes toward the horizon and believe that this crisis too will pass. As I type, several compa-

nies have released news about promising vaccination results and the first inoculations could start as early as December.

We can slowly start painting a picture of what the world will look like after conquering the coronavirus. Like many forward-looking nations, Japan and Finland have both declared ambitious plans toward carbon neutrality. Finland aims to become a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society by 2030. Our stated objective is to achieve carbon neutrality by 2035.

Therefore, it is vital that we not only revive our economies but that we do so sustainably. Investing in greener solutions, exploring sustainable innovations and abandoning harmful habits will ensure that our economies not only recover but flourish.

In October, the Finnish Embassy in Tokyo was fortunate enough to open *Metsä* (Forest) Pavilion, an architecturally remarkable wooden house acting as a platform

for Finnish culture and business in Japan during the Olympic year. The building itself speaks of novel solutions and sustainable thinking: it can be taken apart and reassembled up to 10 times — almost like a giant Finnish Lego. We have used it, for example, to host a hybrid-export promotion event on biomaterials and alternatives for plastic. I, for one, was delighted by the huge number of Japanese participants who came online, driven by their joint interest in new green solutions.

This year, the Finnish Independence Day is an excellent opportunity to be inspired by the power of determination, what we call *sisu*. To translate the old Finnish word into a 21st-century context, it means we are not deterred by even the mighty obstacles ahead, but strive forward and grab the opportunities.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the