
Finland Independence Day Special

Cooperation, collaboration, determination

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It is a great opportunity to address you as new ambassador-designate on the 105th anniversary of Finland's Independence Day.

During this past year, Finland has again been rated as

the happiest country in the world by the U.N. and as the most digitalized country in Europe by the European Union. These are just some of the wonderful traits of my native country that I could elaborate on. Instead, I want to use this valuable platform to talk about a topic that is causing concern for us all, namely Russia's unlawful attack on Ukraine and its consequences.

After a thorough national discussion on the changes in our security environ-

ment, Finland has made a fundamental and historic change in our defense policy and decided to apply for NATO membership.

The ratification process has gone smoothly as already 28 out of 30 NATO members have ratified Finland and Sweden's applications. I hope for a swift conclusion of the ratification process and our official accession to NATO. Finland is not worried — we are prepared.

Ukraine continues to need support in defending its territory. Finland has donated 10 shipments of defense materials to Ukraine with a total value of €160.4 million (¥22.8 billion), in addition to humanitarian and development aid amounting to €98 million. Finland also contributes to the EU's common political, economic and humanitarian support to Ukraine. The response of like-minded countries — including the EU and Japan — has been strong.

Collectively and globally, we are all now facing increasing energy prices as Russia is using access to energy as a weapon. Food insecurity is a growing concern as grain and

wheat exports from Ukrainian ports have been blocked or hindered by Russia's war.

In times of crisis, our collective decision-making and cooperation is vital. We have to show resolve in defending the rules-based international order and continue promoting peace and security globally, including condemning efforts undermining the global nonproliferation regime. Finland's cooperation with Japan and other like-minded partners is already steadfast and now more essential than ever.

Furthermore, long-term global challenges — fighting climate change, overcoming poverty, defending human rights and equality need our attention. I am confident that with skilled diplomacy Finland and Japan can assist in finding effective responses to these problems.

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