

Dr. Ase Gornitzka Pro-rector, University of Oslo  
Prof. Kuroda Kazuyuki, Director, JSPS Stockholm office  
Distinguished Professors,  
Distinguished guests,

Good evening.

It is my great honor to welcome you all to my residence this evening.

First, I would like to congratulate all of you on a successful start of the Norway-Japan Seminar today. We thank you for giving our Embassy the opportunity to introduce our program for academic cooperation between our two countries.

I dare not pretend to have any knowledge about the subject of the seminar. So I should limit myself to talking about Japan-Norway relations, particularly academic exchanges.

Probably my colleagues told you earlier today about the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japan-Norway diplomatic relations and the logo to commemorate this special year 2025. I would like to add that academic exchanges between our two countries also date back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Professor Kristian Birkeland, an esteemed Norwegian physicist famous for, among others, the invention of the process of fixing nitrogen from the air and the extensive research on northern lights, cultivated friendship with Japanese physicists. In 1917, Professor Birkeland visited Tokyo to see Japanese colleagues, but unfortunately, he passed away during his stay. Mr. Terada Torahiko, a famous physicist and essayist, wrote about Professor Birkeland's stay and sudden death in his essay titled "The death of Professor B". Mr. Terada recollected in the essay his visit to Professor Birkeland's laboratory in Norway. Today there is Professor Birkeland's bust in the University of Tokyo.

Based on the long-standing cooperation in science and technology, Japan and Norway concluded the Japan-Norway Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement in 2003, which has been a driving force to further develop science and technology cooperation in a variety of areas, including basic science, energy, environment, marine research including in the Arctic, space, nanotechnology and new materials, and medical, nursing and welfare technology. Furthermore, in 2023, the then Japanese Prime Minister Kishida and Norwegian Prime Minister Store agreed to elevate the Japan-Norway relationship to "Strategic Partnership"

and confirmed in their joint statement that our two countries would continue to promote initiatives on science, research and advanced technology collaboration in a wide range of fields.

I myself had an opportunity to observe Japan-Norway scientific cooperation at work when I visited the Ny-Ålesund Arctic research station in the Svalbard Archipelago last summer. I saw Japanese scientists collect important data on the climate and environment in the Arctic in close collaboration with the Norwegian Polar Institute. I hope that the Arctic area will continue to showcase a good example of international scientific collaboration.

Given the long history in science cooperation, it is very appropriate to designate this seminar as an event to commemorate 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the diplomatic relations between our two countries.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Hylleraas Centre for Quantum Molecular Sciences for organizing this two-day seminar. I also thank the University of Oslo, the JSPS Stockholm Office, the Norwegian Research Council and Innovation Norway for their cooperation in making this event possible. And, last but not least, I appreciate the distinguished participants of the seminar, not only from Japan and Norway but also from Finland and Sweden. With the participation from Finland and Sweden, I think this seminar will also promote scientific exchanges between Japan and the Nordic countries.