



Message from the President of the Republic of Finland to Finnish expatriate communities on 6 December 2016

What does independence mean to you? This is a common question, which many Finns are asked on our Independence Day. And it is a question that we can all take a moment to consider.

The uncertainty affecting the world in recent years has shown that peace and stability cannot be taken for granted by everyone. Each and every Finn has the privilege of celebrating and honouring our country's independence. The sixth of December is also a mark of respect for all those who have defended and nurtured our independence.

Last year was another in which conflicts around the world and instability intensified. We need to understand that such instability is not a passing phenomenon – we will have to live with it for some time to come. Such times require that we step up cooperation within the EU and within the UN.

Together with other countries, Finland must contribute to calming the situation. In a continuously changing world, we cannot achieve absolute safety, but through cooperation we can do much to push the cycle in a more peaceful direction. In this task, every initiative tending towards peace is important.

Next year, we will celebrate the centenary of Finland's independence. The theme of our centenary year is "Together", as will become evident both in Finland and abroad. As our centenary theme suggests, this celebration is for all Finns and friends of Finland. And rightly so, since we Finns live in many different parts of the world. Many find it easy to move between countries and grow into different environments. However, Finnishness knows no bounds – our country and people still need their defenders and advocates, both in Finland and abroad. That is a task that we all share.

Finland is among the world's top countries according to a range of international measures. Studies have shown that Finland is among the best performers in the world based on criteria such as honesty, innovation, literacy, success in education and opportunities for girls. We have also been deemed the world's most stable country. This provides a strong starting point for celebrating our independence.

You, expatriate Finns, are important ambassadors for Finland, spreading the word about the uniqueness of our country. Our strengths can seem self-evident when viewed from close up, but they deserve to be highlighted in our words and thoughts!

I wish you all a wonderful 99th Finnish Independence Day and peaceful days ahead as Christmas approaches.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sauli Niinistö".

Sauli Niinistö
The President of the Republic of Finland