



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC

Finland's Independence Day is again celebrated in Finnish homes and communities around the world.

In the great transatlantic migration between the 1860s and 1930s, many people left Finland to seek a new life abroad, particularly in North America. However, although they left Finland behind, they did not forget those who stayed. Letters, cards and photos detailing the joys and sorrows of the migrants' new lives travelled back and forth across land and sea. These messages were sometimes very long in coming.

Today, there are some 250,000 Finns living abroad. If we include their descendants, the total comes to more than one million. The desire and need to stay in touch with Finland, with one's culture as well as with friends and relatives remain as strong today as in earlier times.

However, in the age of the internet, it is much easier and quicker to share our everyday lives than it was back in the days of surface mail. Communication between continents and other time zones is straightforward. The distances have grown shorter. I hope that in the case of expatriate Finns this will strengthen their sense of belonging and ties to their home country. I believe that following and participating in current public debates in Finland and sharing Finnish culture are an important part of experiencing what it is to be a Finn.

Although the world is smaller and perhaps more uniform in its ways, Finland and Finns remain distinct among all other countries and nations. Today, candles will once again be lit on thousands of window sills all around the world to celebrate Finland and its independence.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all expatriate Finns a happy Independence Day and a peaceful Christmas season.

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

Sauli Niinistö
President of the Republic