

عـــام من العـــلاقات الدبلوماسيـــة

Years Of Diplomatic Relations

الإمـــارات - فنلنـــدا

U.A.E - FINLAND



Shaping the Next 50 Years, Together:
People-to-People Stories

The design for this anniversary publication is inspired by the national birds of the UAE and Finland – the falcon and the whooper swan. Each embodies distinct yet complementary values: the falcon, with its precision and strength, symbolizes ambition and forward vision; the swan, with its grace and resilience, reflects continuity and quiet power. Together, they share the same sky – a metaphor for fifty years of UAE-Finland relations, built on dialogue, mutual respect, and a commitment to progress.

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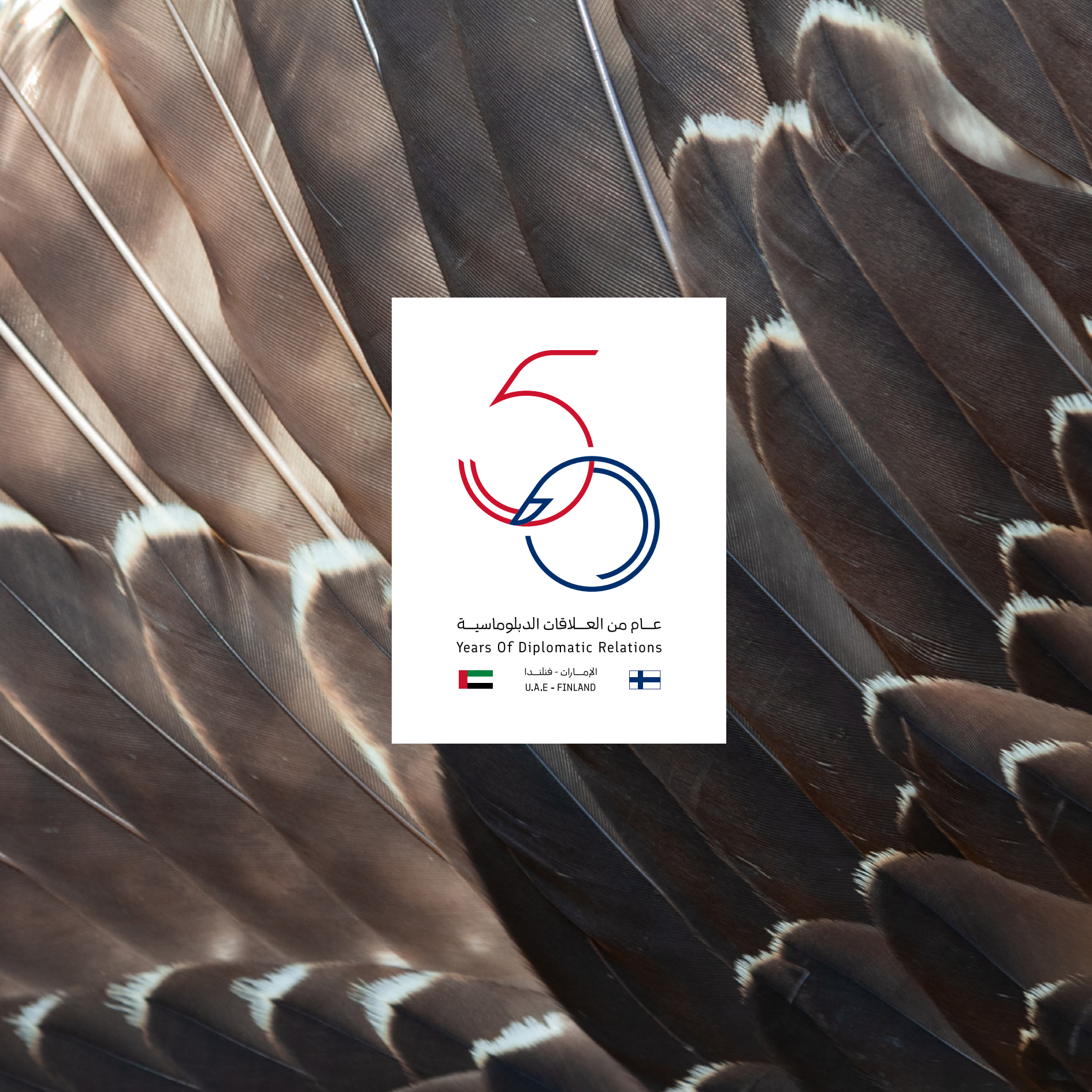
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الإمـارات - فنلنـدا
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Contents

6 - 9
Forewords

10 - 11
Introduction

12 - 35
Celebrating 50 Years of UAE-Finland Relations

36 - 65
History of Diplomatic Representation

66 - 83
Trade & Investment

84 - 105
Technology, Science & Space

106 - 119
Peace, Security & Conflict Mediation

120 - 137
Education & Health

138 - 155
Renewable Energy & Sustainability

156
Acknowledgements

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As we embark on the next 50 years, I am confident that the UAE and Finland will continue forging strong partnerships and pioneering solutions that benefit our societies and the broader global community.



H.E. Noura Al Kaabi

UAE MINISTER OF STATE

Connections of Values, Culture & Progress

In 1975, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Finland established diplomatic relations which would prove to be far more than a formal agreement between our governments. What began as official ties has flourished into a partnership built on shared values, mutual respect and genuine human connections that transcend geographic and cultural boundaries.

The UAE and Finland stand as a testament to the transformative power of a shared national vision. Both of our countries have redefined their global roles within a generation. The UAE from a pearl diving economy to a diversified, global economic hub and Finland from an agricultural society to a technology powerhouse. Finland through technological innovation and sustainable development, and the UAE through economic diversification and inclusive, forward-thinking policies. Our 50 years of diplomatic ties reflect this shared commitment to progress.

In a world where nations often emphasize their differences, Finland and the UAE have spent 50 years discovering remarkable similarities. Our collaborations span cutting-edge sectors, from artificial intelligence (AI) and space technology to polar research and renewable energy. Through Finnish companies' contributions to the UAE's economy and growing UAE investments in Finland, our economic partnership demonstrates how our complementary strengths can create mutual prosperity for both nations.

This spirit of collaborative innovation was beautifully embodied at the official celebration to mark the 50th anniversary of bilateral relations in Helsinki, where I witnessed a memorable cultural performance. The seamless harmony achieved by Finnish and Emirati artists reflected the same collaborative excellence we see in our diplomatic, economic and technological partnerships. When the Emirati-Finnish ensemble performed each of the national anthems, I noticed the emotions that the performance evoked in the audience. The moment served as a reminder that strong, successful partnerships such as ours are built on not only shared vision and values but also genuine connections.

Today, with Finland recognized as the world's happiest country and the UAE consistently ranked among the most innovative and safest nations, we represent complementary models of how societies can thrive while honoring their unique identities. Our collaboration in addressing climate change, advocating for women's empowerment and fostering innovation demonstrates that partnerships rooted in a shared vision and shared values can create lasting impact.

The stories in this book celebrate five decades of such connections creating lasting ties. As we embark on the next 50 years, I am confident that the UAE and Finland will continue forging strong partnerships and pioneering solutions that benefit our societies and the broader global community.

H.E. Amna Fikri

UAE AMBASSADOR TO FINLAND

Documenting UAE-Finland Ties: A Personal Mission

When I started my posting as the UAE's Ambassador to Finland in September 2022, my knowledge of Finnish history and culture was based on a childhood love for the Moomins fairy-tale characters and a mixture of stereotypes: Finland as the happiest country, the land of saunas and as the birthplace of Nokia. Likewise, my knowledge of the history of the diplomatic ties between the UAE and Finland was limited.

Initially, Finland seemed a distant and remote place that could not be more different from my native home in the Emirates. But after immersing myself deeply in Finnish history, its literature, and the past trajectory of our bilateral ties, I was convinced that there is a big story to tell.

Since then, I have made it a personal mission to dive deep into the people-to-people stories that connect our two nations. Not only from a professional and official perspective, but also at a personal (humane) level. After all, these human interactions stand at the very heart of any bilateral diplomatic relationship. They have guided its course over the past 50 years and will be shaping the next five decades as well.

The stories I was told and those I encountered in archives and elsewhere, were all equally fascinating. Curating them into this volume, thereby creating a book by the people and for the people of both our friendly nations, is one of the outcomes of my initial mission. My hope is that you will enjoy reading the stories in this book as much as I did when first hearing (and reading) them.

Another outcome of my mission has been the establishment of the "Friends of the UAE Circle", an Embassy initiative to acknowledge and celebrate the people who have positively and significantly contributed to the growing relations between the UAE and Finland. With this initiative, we will not only keep their stories alive, but also the connections that come with it. We launched the "Friends of the UAE Circle" in March 2025 during the official visit to Finland of H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

To conclude, I hope these stories and connections inspire others in the decades to come. They will act as a testament of what a bilateral relationship really is and means: that it is always us, people, who stand at the core of it; and it is us who decide how to interact, and what kind of story we wish to tell the world. Indeed, the UAE-Finland story proved to be an inspiring one worth documenting and sharing with everyone!

“

I hope these stories and connections inspire others in the decades to come. They will act as a testament of what a bilateral relationship really is and means: that it is always us, the people, who stand at the core of it; and it is us who decide how to interact, and what kind of story we wish to tell the world.



Introduction

"During my visit to Finland, I was profoundly impressed by the spirit of determination and purpose, which resonates deeply with the core values of the United Arab Emirates. Both our nations are guided by a robust sense of national identity and a clear vision for the future, anchored in a shared commitment to progress, innovation, and global cooperation."

H.H. SHEIKH ABDULLAH BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN,
UAE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

In 2025, the UAE and Finland marked the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations. These official ties were established just four years after the founding of the UAE under the wise and visionary leadership of H.H. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (may God rest his soul).

Over the past half-century, relations between the UAE and Finland have flourished at every level. While the two countries differ greatly in geography, climate, and culture, they share fundamental qualities: a strong sense of national identity, a clear strategic vision, and an unwavering spirit of determination – known in Arabic as *al azima, al jedd, al mothabara*, and in Finnish as *sisu*. At the international level, this goes hand in hand with a deep commitment to diplomatic dialogue, international cooperation, and multilateralism.

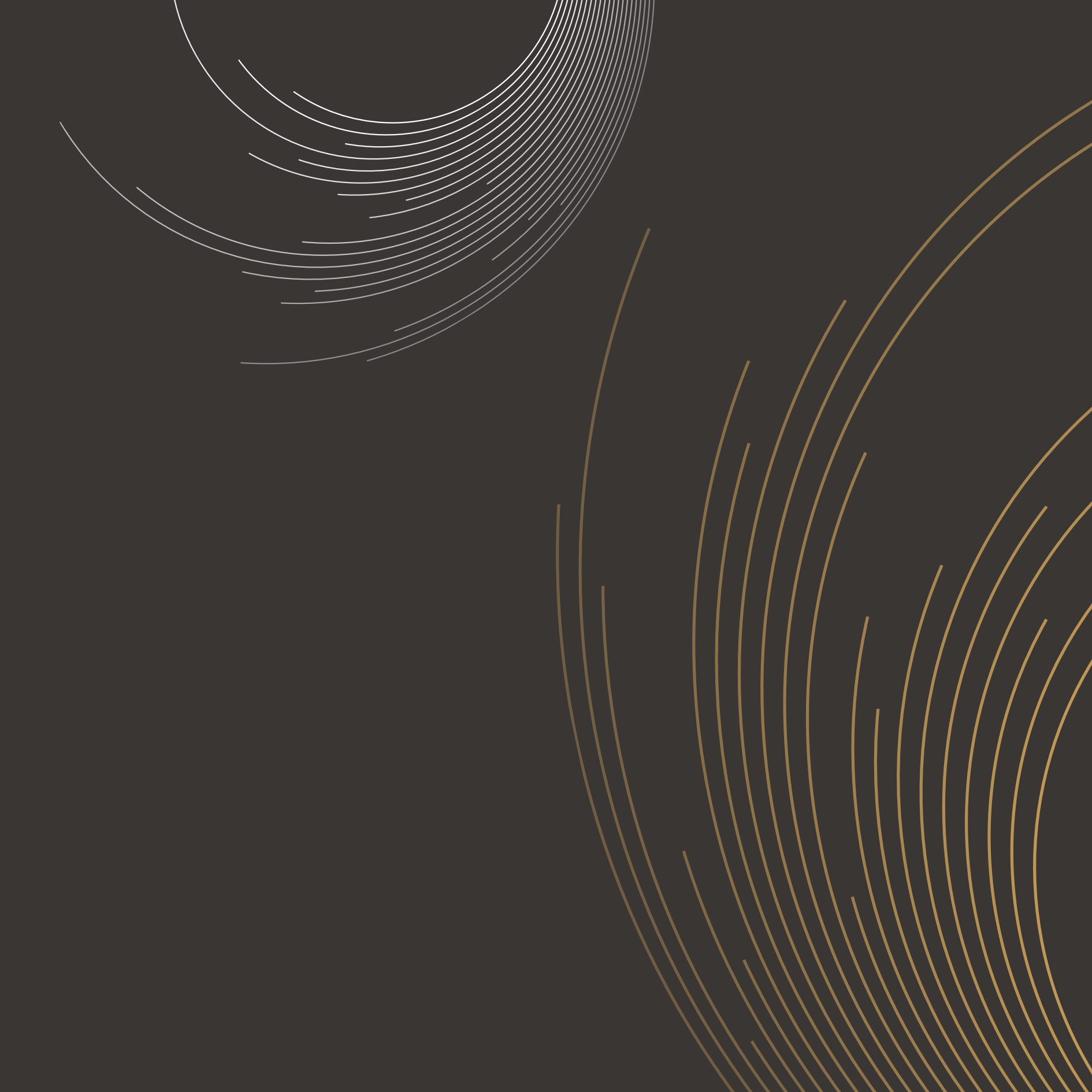
Trade and economic cooperation have always been the engine of UAE-Finnish ties. Today, the UAE is Finland's largest trading partner in the Gulf region, both for exports and imports. But the UAE and Finland have also discovered substantial common ground in other areas, from a shared commitment to sustainability and a passion for education, to expertise in peace mediation, a strong record on women's empowerment, and leadership in science and advanced technology, including AI and space. These shared priorities have provided fertile ground for impactful collaborations and innovative initiatives.

Over the decades, invaluable connections have been forged – political, economic, and personal alike. With people-to-people ties at the heart of diplomacy, this book presents a selection of stories that embodies and personifies the past and present of UAE-Finland relations. It aims to serve both as a record of the first 50 years of diplomatic engagement and as an inspiration for the decades to come.



> *As engaged and responsible members of the international community, the UAE and Finland continue to exemplify how principled leadership and mutual respect can shape a more prosperous and stable world.*

H.H. SHEIKH ABDULLAH BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN,
UAE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Celebrating 50 Years of
UAE-Finland Relations

Celebrating 50 Years of UAE-Finland Relations

The year 2025 marked a truly special chapter in the diplomatic relations between the UAE and Finland, distinguished by high-level exchanges and meaningful cultural moments.

The year 2025 marked a truly special chapter in the diplomatic relations between the UAE and Finland, distinguished by high-level exchanges and meaningful cultural moments.

In January, the Prime Minister of Finland, H.E. Petteri Orpo, visited the UAE. Just two months later, in March, H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, paid an official visit to Finland. The year culminated in a landmark occasion: the visit of the President of Finland, H.E. Dr. Alexander Stubb, to the UAE at the invitation of the President of the UAE, H.H. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

The UAE Embassy in Helsinki marked the anniversary year with an unprecedented joint orchestra concert at the iconic Finlandia Hall. The event featured a curated program of Emirati and Finnish musical masterpieces. Emirati opera singer and artist Fatima Alhashmi headlined the performance, joined by Finnish cellist Jussi Makkonen, pianist Nazig Azezian, 18 musicians from the UAE, and 35 musicians from the Lohja City Orchestra.

2025 also saw the official launch of the “Friends of the UAE” Circle – a new initiative celebrating Finnish citizens who have spent a significant part of their lives in the UAE and, each in their own way, contributed to the nation’s success story and to the flourishing of UAE-Finland relations. Through this circle, the UAE Embassy in Helsinki seeks to keep these personal connections alive and to honor the rich tapestry of professional and personal stories that continue to bind the two nations.







“There is great potential to advance political and economic ties between Finland and the UAE for the mutual benefit of our two nations. I am convinced that together we can also address global challenges in a sustainable and peaceful manner.

H.E. PETTERI ORPO,
PRIME MINISTER OF FINLAND











“

As we mark 50 years of diplomatic relations between Finland and the UAE, I am delighted to see that a robust and enduring partnership has grown between our countries across political, economic, and environmental domains. High-level visits and the first-ever Helsinki Policy Forum in Abu Dhabi underscore the active and constructive dialogue between the two nations.

Economically, the UAE has become Finland's top trading partner in the Gulf region, with emerging sectors offering plenty of opportunities. Both countries share a strong commitment to sustainability and to leveraging innovations like green hydrogen to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon future.

I am confident that our close and trusted partnership will continue to grow in depth and breadth, both bilaterally and on the international stage, in the years to come.

H.E. ELINA VALTONEN,
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF FINLAND


50
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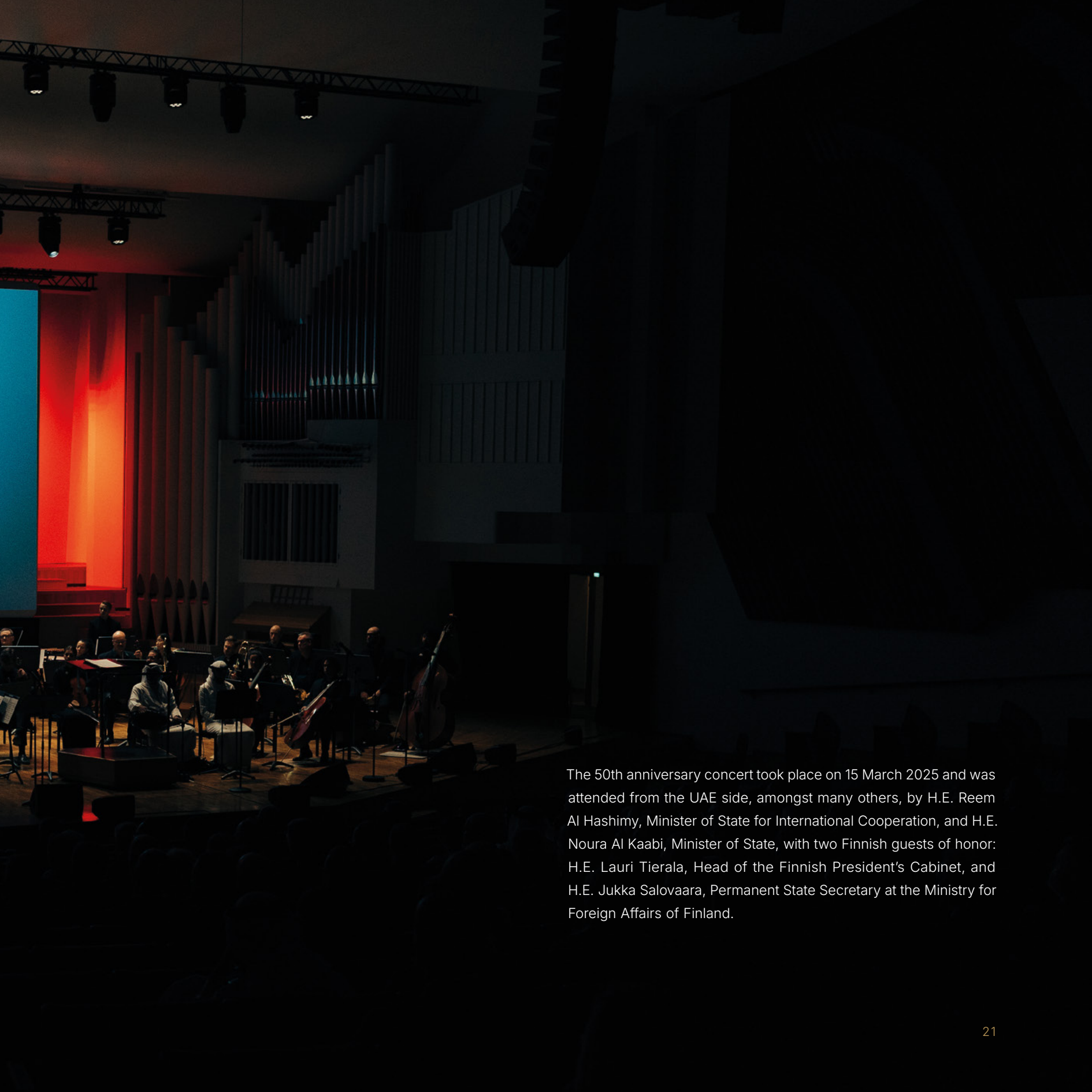
Shaping the Next 50 Years, Together
FINLANDIA



The 50th anniversary concert took place on 15 March 2025 and was attended from the UAE side, amongst many others, by H.E. Reem Al Hashimy, Minister of State for International Cooperation, and H.E. Noura Al Kaabi, Minister of State, with two Finnish guests of honor: H.E. Lauri Tierala, Head of the Finnish President's Cabinet, and H.E. Jukka Salovaara, Permanent State Secretary at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.



People-to-people connections are the true drivers of international cooperation. Partnerships and friendships at the individual level constitute the heart of our countries' joint achievements. The newly launched "Friends of the UAE" Circle is a great initiative keeping these connections alive. My interactions with the members made me once again realize the positive mark that the UAE is leaving across the globe.

H.E. NOURA AL KAABI,
UAE MINISTER OF STATE





> *In a world where nations often emphasize their differences, Finland and the UAE have spent fifty years discovering remarkable similarities. Both are countries that transformed dramatically within living memory. The UAE from a pearl diving economy to a diversified, global economic hub and Finland from an agricultural society to a technology powerhouse. Both of our countries value tolerance, education, equality and environmental stewardship as foundations of national strength.*

H.E. NOURA AL KAABI,
UAE MINISTER OF STATE


Concert Program
16:25
Lulu-at Al Ahal
Lyrics: Traditional Emirati song; Music: Mohamed Alghoom;
Performance: Fatima Alhashmi & Juma Aljunaibi with choir
16:31
Hubokom West Elhasha
Lyrics: The late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Founder of the UAE and First President;
Music: Khaled Nasser; Arrangement: Fadel Alhamidi, Performance: Fatima Alhashmi
6:36
Ayloul
Lyrics: HH Sheikha Khawla Bint Ahmed Khalifa Al-Suwaidi; Music: Naseer Shamma;
Performance: Fatima Alhashmi
6:41
Qalb bila haras
Lyrics: Amal Al Sahlawi; Music: Ihab Darwish; Performance: Fatima Alhashmi
6:46-17:05
Jean Sibelius (1865-1957): Svarta rosor (Black roses) Op. 36/1
Oskar Merikanto
Op. 24/1
Jean Sibelius
Op. 26


Sibelius (1865-1957): Svarta rosor (Black roses) Op. 36/1
STEINWAY & SONS

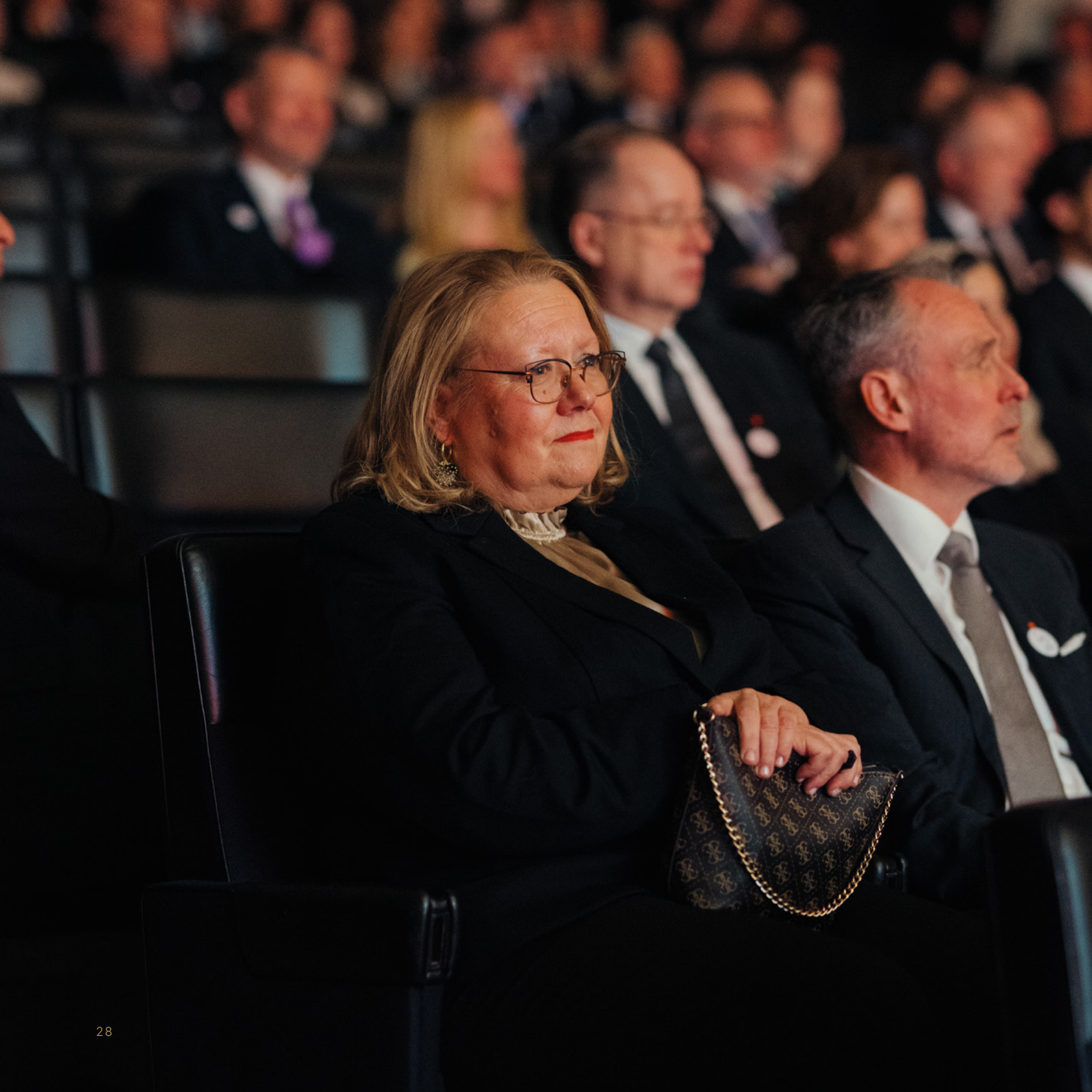


This year, we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Finland and the UAE. Over the past five decades, both countries have emerged as forward-looking and prosperous nations, as well as global leaders in education, technology and innovation.

Finland and the UAE maintain an active and constructive political dialogue on bilateral, regional and global issues. Recent high-level visits and meetings are a key indication of the vitality of our relations. In terms of economy, the UAE has been Finland's largest trading partner in the Gulf region for three consecutive years.

I am confident that our close and long-standing partnership will continue to strengthen in areas of mutual interest, both bilaterally and in multilateral fora. I extend my warmest wishes for fruitful cooperation between our countries in the years and decades to come.

H.E. LAURI TIERALA,
CHIEF OF STAFF, OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FINLAND



H.E. Tuula Yrjölä

FINLAND'S AMBASSADOR TO THE UAE

> *Our two nations share a deep commitment to co-creating solutions that shape the future responsibly, effectively and efficiently.*

In these turbulent times, it is reassuring that the relationship between Finland and the UAE stands on the sturdy base of already half a century of cooperation. But more importantly, we are united in looking forward to the next 50 years and beyond. Our two nations share a deep commitment to co-creating solutions that shape the future responsibly, effectively and efficiently. Innovation is in our DNAs.

Happiness likewise. After all, Finland is the happiest country in the world for the eighth year running, and the UAE welcomes visitors with Happiness Desks and helpful attitudes wherever one goes. Visitors are amazed at encountering smiles wherever they go. Personally, I am spoiled by the friendliness and warmth that I experience from the Emiratis that I meet, in addition to the warmth of the sun that shines throughout the year! More seriously, we Finns and Emiratis want to ensure the wellbeing of our citizens and all those living in our countries.

We address global challenges such as climate change by seeking solutions, not by falling into despair. We appreciate the opportunities that emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) offer, but we also recognize the importance of HI – human intelligence.

I have been in the UAE for two years now and I have come to appreciate how well our ambitions and expertise match. The UAE's incredibly dynamic development and high level of ambition match well with many of Finland's and Finnish companies' strengths. It is easy to represent Finland here. And challenging, because so much is happening, especially during this anniversary year of our friendship. I also know that this dynamic will continue, the opportunities for cooperation are endless. I am grateful to my colleague and 'co-conspirator' in Helsinki, H.E. Ambassador Amna Fikri, for her friendship and active bridging of UAE and Finnish companies, people and ideas.

On a personal note, I wish that I had more free time to explore the diversity that the seven Emirates offer, in addition to working visits that are a big part of this job. But alas, we keep busy, and for a good reason!

This 50th Anniversary Year is a milestone in our relations. I am humbled to have the opportunity to be celebrating it in Abu Dhabi, through the consolidation of relations between Finland and the UAE in political and economic terms.

Ammar Ilyas Alfarsi

STUDENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS &
UAE EMBASSY TRAINEE

An Exceptional Experience at the UAE Embassy in Helsinki

In early 2025, as an Emirati student of international relations, I had the unique opportunity to intern at the UAE Embassy in Finland, a country I had never visited before but quickly came to admire. I chose Finland to challenge myself in a new environment that would broaden my professional scope and immerse me in a distinct cultural setting.

My journey began in Abu Dhabi during the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, where I had the honor of meeting H.E. Petteri Orpo, Prime Minister of Finland, alongside H.E. Amna Fikri, UAE's Ambassador to Finland and Estonia, and H.E. Tuula Johanna Yrjölä, Finland's Ambassador to the UAE. That interaction cemented my decision to pursue the internship in Helsinki.

From January to March of 2025, my experience was both professionally enriching and personally transformative. From the outset, I was treated not merely as a trainee but as an integral part of the diplomatic team. This allowed me to contribute meaningfully to the Embassy's mission and work closely with H.E. Amna Fikri. One of the most memorable moments was taking part in the visit of H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Living in Finland exposed me to a way of life defined by calm precision, quiet efficiency, and strong societal values, vastly different from the dynamic pace of the UAE. Despite the cold climate, I found the people to be warm and sincere, always willing to help. I was particularly amazed by the parallels between our countries, both of which prioritize education, technological progress, and forward-looking diplomacy.

Personally, the internship strengthened my sense of independence as I adapted to a new climate, social norms, and daily life far from home. It also deepened my passion for cross-cultural engagement and expanded my understanding of what global citizenship truly means.

My wish for the next 50 years is to see the UAE and Finland deepen collaboration in areas such as renewable energy, student exchange, more cultural engagement among the youth, and innovation, sectors where both countries have much to offer and learn from one another.


Still a lot to feel
together
feel

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE

Ali Al Saloom

AWARD-WINNING PRODUCER & PRESENTER

> *Our shared respect for cultural heritage while embracing modernity creates fertile ground for deeper collaboration.*

Duroob in Finland

As a cultural documentary creator, my journey often leads me to extraordinary places, but my visit to Finland holds a special place in my heart. Although my time in Finland was brief, it was profoundly rich in experiences, encounters, and inspiration.

I had the privilege of producing several documentary episodes that capture the essence of Finland, its breathtaking nature, its tranquil landscapes, and above all, the warmth of its people. Despite the freezing temperatures, the kindness, hospitality, and genuine smiles of everyone we met, added a rare warmth to our experience, making every moment memorable and meaningful.

I must also extend my deep gratitude to the UAE Embassy and H.E. Ambassador Amna Fikri in Helsinki, whose insightful guidance and support were pivotal to the success of our project. Her assistance not only facilitated our work but also enabled us to explore cultural parallels between the UAE and Finland. This connection fostered a bridge of understanding and respect between our two nations, further strengthening the ties that unite us.

The synergies between the UAE and Finland are striking. Both nations are small in size yet ambitious in vision, driven by a commitment to innovation, education, and sustainable development. Moreover, our shared respect for cultural heritage while embracing modernity creates fertile ground for deeper collaboration.

Finland may seem like a quiet, distant land, but in reality, it is a hub of creativity, education, and forward-thinking solutions. This is something I believe more people around the world especially in the UAE should know about Finland. It is a place where tradition and technology coexist gracefully.

Finland has left an indelible mark on my creative journey, and I look forward to returning, both as a storyteller and as a friend of this remarkable country.


RONI



Nicolas von Walzel

FOUNDER & MANAGING DIRECTOR,
ELIXIRIA TRADING LLC

> *Both nations value education, innovation, and sustainability, and both share a profound respect for service and duty.*

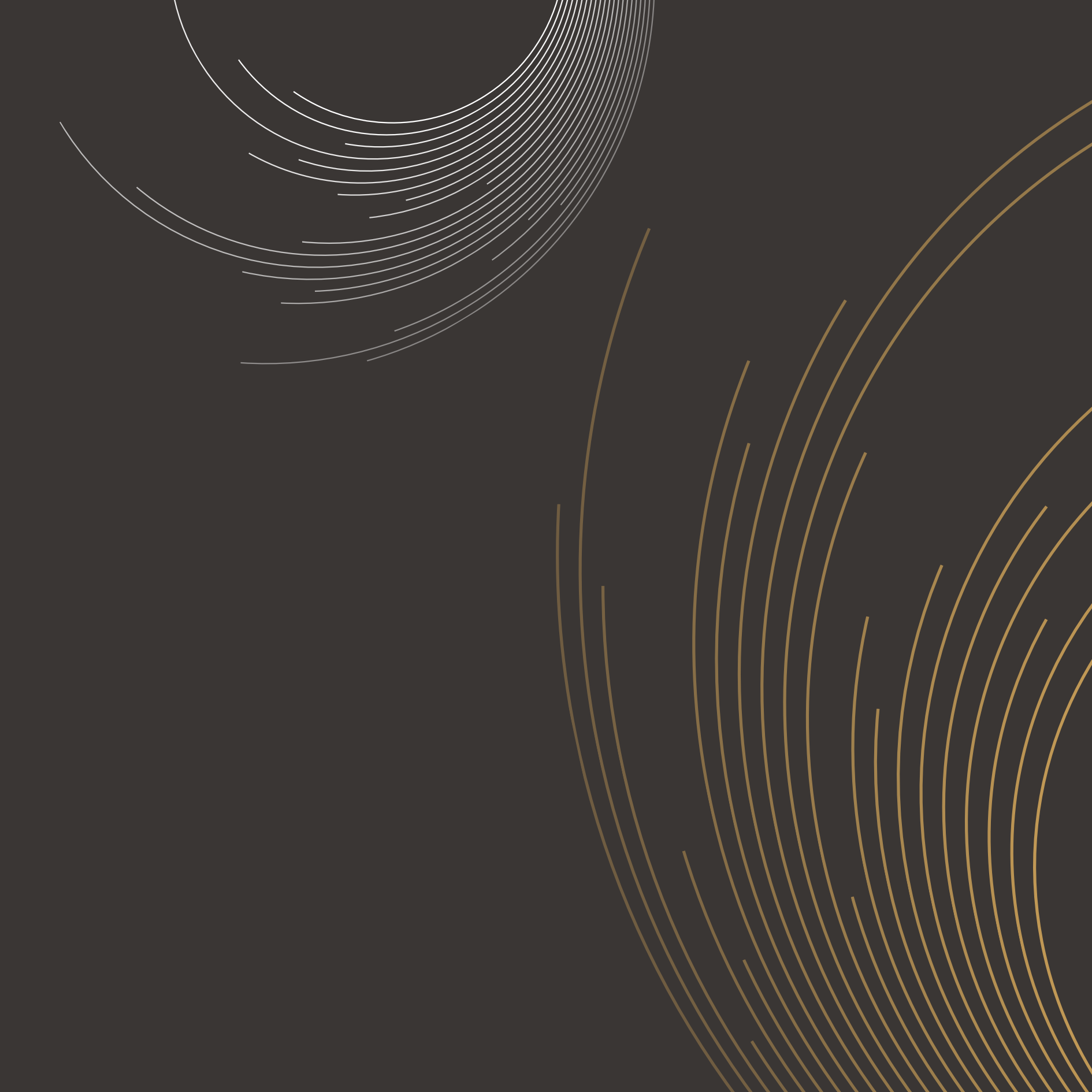
Living and working in a country that constantly reinvents itself has shown the importance of setting bold goals, believing in achievement, and embracing collaboration as a force for progress. The UAE's openness, ambition, and respect for tradition provide an inspiring model for how societies can remain rooted in their heritage while looking confidently toward the future.

One of the most striking aspects of the relationship between Finland and the UAE is how naturally bridges form between the two cultures. Both nations value education, innovation, and sustainability, and both share a profound respect for service and duty. Military service, for example, plays a transformative role in shaping young people into responsible citizens, a reminder that responsibility to society is a cornerstone of national strength.

There are also deeper cultural parallels that often go unnoticed. The UAE treasures its "black gold" (oil), while Finland treasures its "green gold" (forests). These resources have powered economic growth, yet their significance extends far beyond material wealth. Both societies remain connected to nature as a source of identity and resilience. Emiratis find peace in the desert, gathered around a campfire under the stars, while Finns experience the same sense of belonging by a fireplace at a lakeside cabin. In both places, this connection reflects a tribal heritage where simplicity, unity, and respect for the land remain central values.

For those unfamiliar with the UAE, it is important to highlight the country's remarkable ability to harmonize tradition with progress. It is a society that welcomes the world, embraces diversity, and encourages innovation while preserving its cultural foundations. This dual strength is what makes the UAE an exceptional partner for Finland and for the wider global community.

My mission is to continue bringing Finnish innovation, design, and cultural heritage to the UAE, working tirelessly to do good for the country, to help make its citizens healthier, happier, and building towards a brighter future. Looking ahead, the opportunities for deeper cooperation between the UAE and Finland are significant. From health technologies to cultural exchange, both nations have much to offer one another. The true strength of this partnership lies in the synergies between Finland's pragmatism and resilience and the UAE's ambition and vision. Inspired by the leadership of H.H. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, and Their Highnesses across the Emirates, I remain committed to contributing to this shared journey.



History of Diplomatic Representation

History of Diplomatic Representation

"The United Arab Emirates and the Republic of Finland share a longstanding and evolving partnership, founded on mutual respect and a shared commitment to progress. Since Finland's recognition of the UAE in 1972 and the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1975, our ties have deepened through decades of constructive cooperation. The inauguration of Finland's new embassy headquarters in Abu Dhabi stands as a testament to the depth, dynamism, and forward-looking nature of our bilateral relationship."

H.H. SHEIKH ABDULLAH BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN,
UAE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

On 5 May 1972, Finland's Prime Minister Rafael Paasio sent a diplomatic note to H.H. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, founder and former President of the UAE, stating: "The Finnish government have today recognized the Union of Arab Emirates as a sovereign and independent state. I express my government's wish to strengthen all relations with Your Excellency's people and government."

This recognition paved the way for the establishment of formal diplomatic relations on 21 February 1975. In the early years, the UAE's diplomatic representation to Finland was accredited through its mission in Bonn, West Germany. Finland, initially, represented its interests in the UAE through its mission in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and later on through Kuwait. The first Finnish diplomatic mission in Abu Dhabi opened in 1980, and in 1991 it was elevated to the status of an Embassy. The UAE, in turn, opened its Embassy in Finland in 2017, which was again reopened in 2023.

High-level visits have played a key role in strengthening bilateral ties. In 1996, H.E. Martti Ahtisaari, Finland's President, conducted the first official State Visit to the UAE. Nineteen years later, in 2015, H.E. President Sauli Niinistö followed in his footsteps with a second State Visit. In 2009, H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan paid an official visit to Finland, returning again in 2025. At the end of 2025, the Presidents of the two nations, H.H Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and H.E. Dr. Alexander Stubb, met once more during a State Visit, underscoring the enduring strength of the relationship.



“As we mark 50 years of diplomatic ties, we reaffirm our collective ambition to advance collaboration across strategic sectors - including renewable energy, advanced science, space, and technology - for the shared benefit of our peoples and future generations.

H.H. SHEIKH ABDULLAH BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN,
UAE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Key Milestones in Diplomatic Relations





1975
Formal diplomatic relations established.

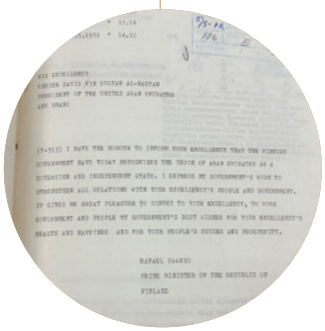
1996
State Visit by Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari.

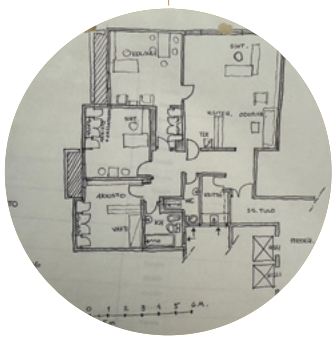
2015
State Visit by Finnish President Sauli Niinistö.

1972
Finland recognized the UAE.

1980
Finland opened its diplomatic mission in Abu Dhabi.

2009
Official Visit by UAE Foreign Minister H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan.







Emirati-Finnish Business Council established.

2023

UAE re-opened its Embassy in Helsinki.

2025

Celebrating 50 Years of Diplomatic Ties.

2021

First UAE-Finland Joint Committee meeting.

2017

UAE opened its Embassy in Helsinki.

2022

First UAE-Finland Political Consultations.



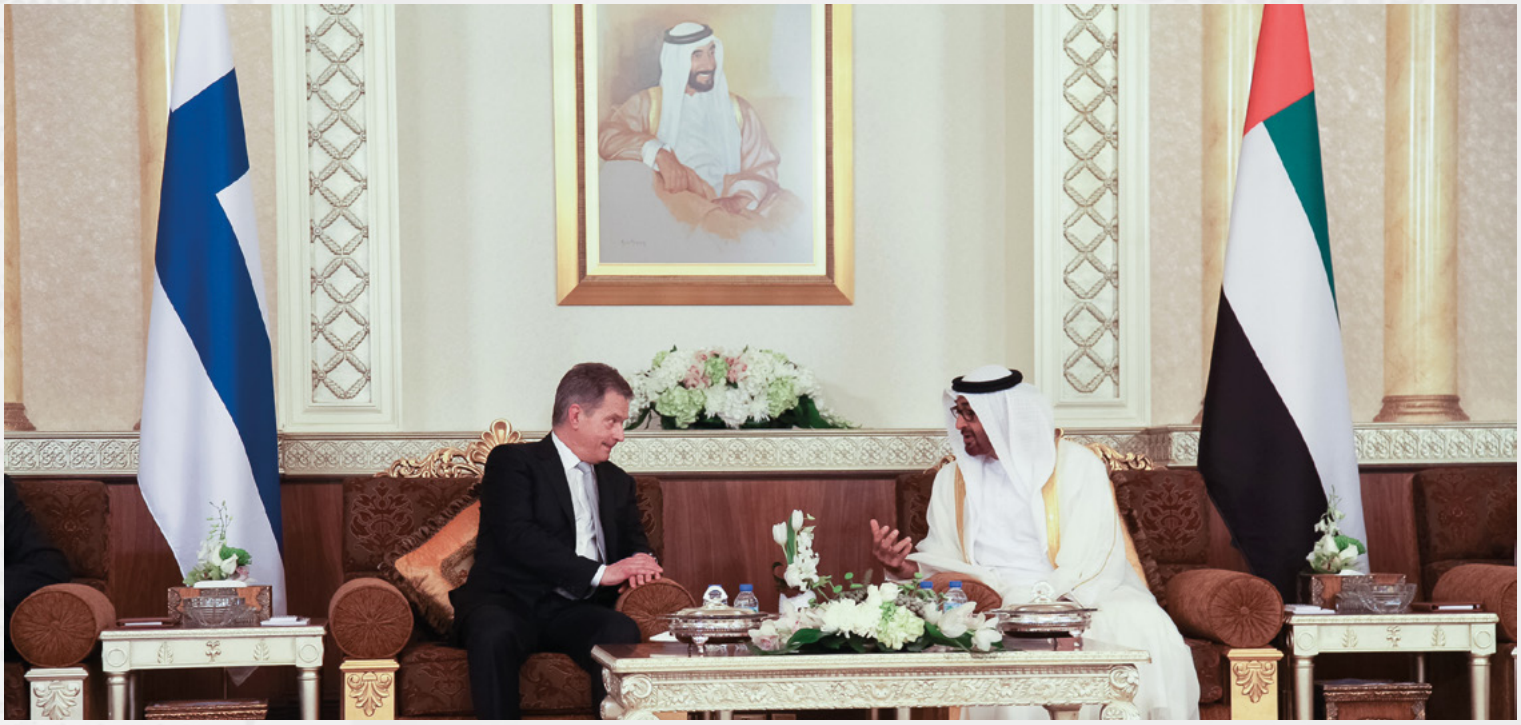
2024

Second UAE-Finland Joint Committee meeting.



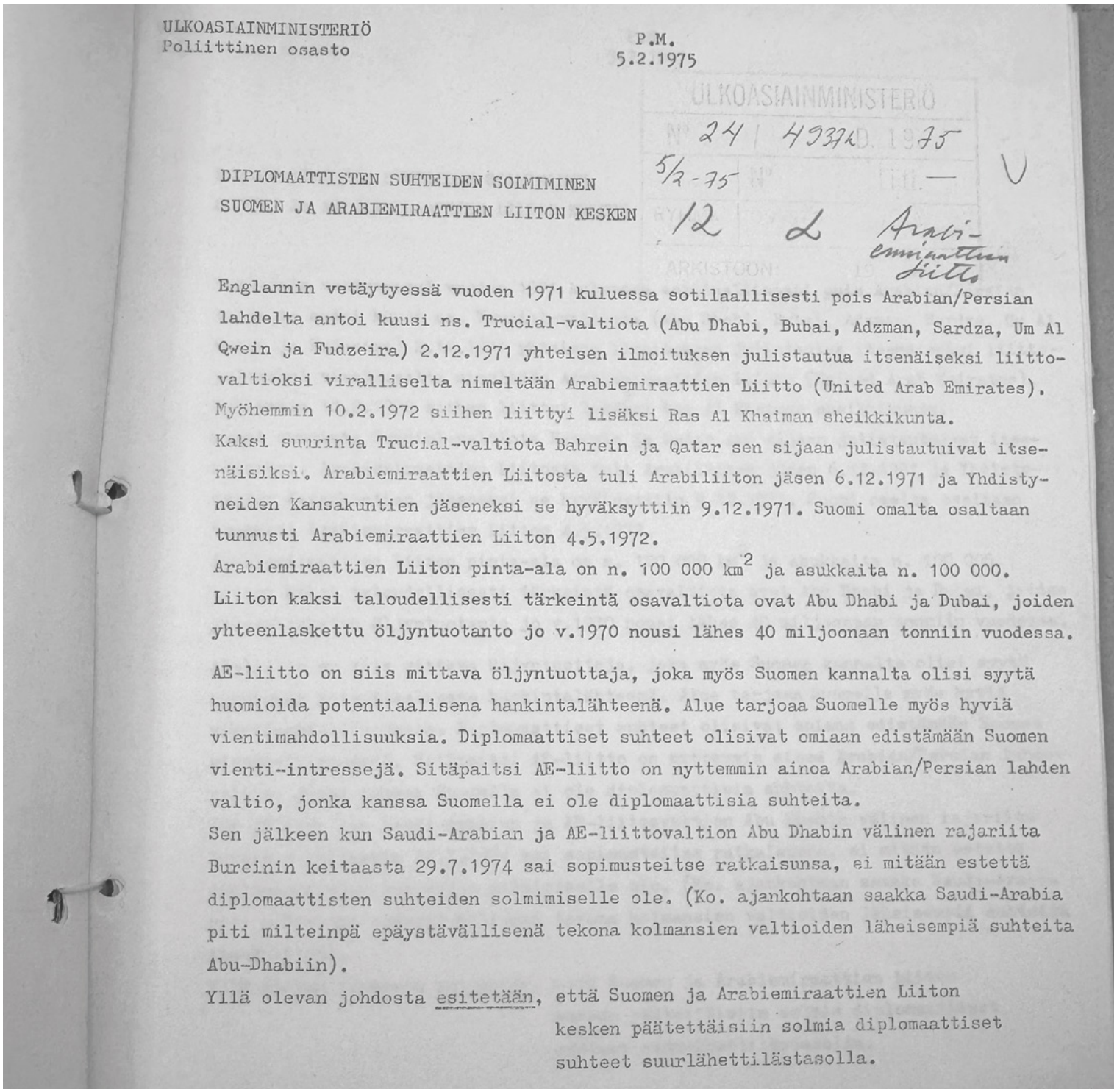


1996: STATE VISIT BY FINNISH PRESIDENT H.E. MARTTI AHTISAARI.





2015: STATE VISIT BY FINNISH PRESIDENT H.E. SAULI NIINISTÖ.



ULKOASIAINMINISTERIÖ
Poliittinen osasto

P.M.
5.2.1975

ULKOASIAINMINISTERIÖ
N:o 24 / 4937/2 D. 1975
ARKISTOON

5/2-75

DIPLOMAATTISTEN SUHTEIDEN SOLMIMINEN
SUOMEN JA ARABIEMIRAATTIEN LIITON KESKEN

12 2 Arabiemiraattien Liitto

Englannin vetäytyessä vuoden 1971 kuluessa sotilaallisesti pois Arabian/Persian lahdelta antoi kuusi ns. Trucial-valtiota (Abu Dhabi, Bubai, Adzman, Sardza, Um Al Qwein ja Fudzeira) 2.12.1971 yhteisen ilmoituksen julistautua itsenäiseksi liittovaltioksi viralliselta nimeltään Arabiemiraattien Liitto (United Arab Emirates). Myöhemmin 10.2.1972 siihen liittyi lisäksi Ras Al Khaiman sheikkikunta.
Kaksi suurinta Trucial-valtiota Bahrein ja Qatar sen sijaan julistautuivat itsenäisiksi. Arabiemiraattien Liitosta tuli Arabiliiton jäsen 6.12.1971 ja Yhdistyneiden Kansakuntien jäseneksi se hyväksyttiin 9.12.1971. Suomi omalta osaltaan tunnusti Arabiemiraattien Liiton 4.5.1972.
Arabiemiraattien Liiton pinta-ala on n. 100 000 km^2 ja asukkaita n. 100 000. Liiton kaksi taloudellisesti tärkeintä osavaltiota ovat Abu Dhabi ja Dubai, joiden yhteenlaskettu öljyntuotanto jo v.1970 nousi lähes 40 miljoonaan tonniin vuodessa.

AE-liitto on siis mittava öljyntuottaja, joka myös Suomen kannalta olisi syytä huomioida potentiaalisena hankintalähteenä. Alue tarjoaa Suomelle myös hyviä vientimahdollisuuksia. Diplomaattiset suhteet olisivat omiaan edistämään Suomen vienti-intressejä. Sitäpaitsi AE-liitto on nyttemmin ainoa Arabian/Persian lahden valtio, jonka kanssa Suomella ei ole diplomaattisia suhteita.
Sen jälkeen kun Saudi-Arabian ja AE-liittovaltion Abu Dhabin välinen rajariita Burcinin keitaasta 29.7.1974 sai sopimusteitse ratkaisunsa, ei mitään estettä diplomaattisten suhteiden solmimiselle ole. (Ko. ajankohtaan saakka Saudi-Arabia piti milteinpä epäystävällisenä tekona kolmansien valtioiden läheisempiä suhteita Abu-Dhabiin).
Yllä olevan johdosta esitetään, että Suomen ja Arabiemiraattien Liiton kesken päätettäisiin solmia diplomaattiset suhteet suurlähettilästasolla.



On 21 February 1975, following a proposal by the Government, the President of the Republic of Finland approved the establishment of diplomatic relations with the UAE. That same year, Finland appointed its first Ambassador to the UAE. In his initial reports to Helsinki, he expressed admiration for the wisdom of the Founding Fathers who united to form the UAE.

Since then, our bilateral relations have grown steadily, fostering a dynamic and multifaceted partnership. This collaboration has expanded across various sectors, notably in the economic, environmental, technological, and political spheres. Finland remains committed to deepening its cooperation with the UAE and to supporting the continued success of our joint initiatives. I look forward to further strengthening the bonds between our nations for the shared prosperity of our peoples.

H.E. JUKKA SALOVAARA,
PERMANENT STATE SECRETARY
AT THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND




MENU



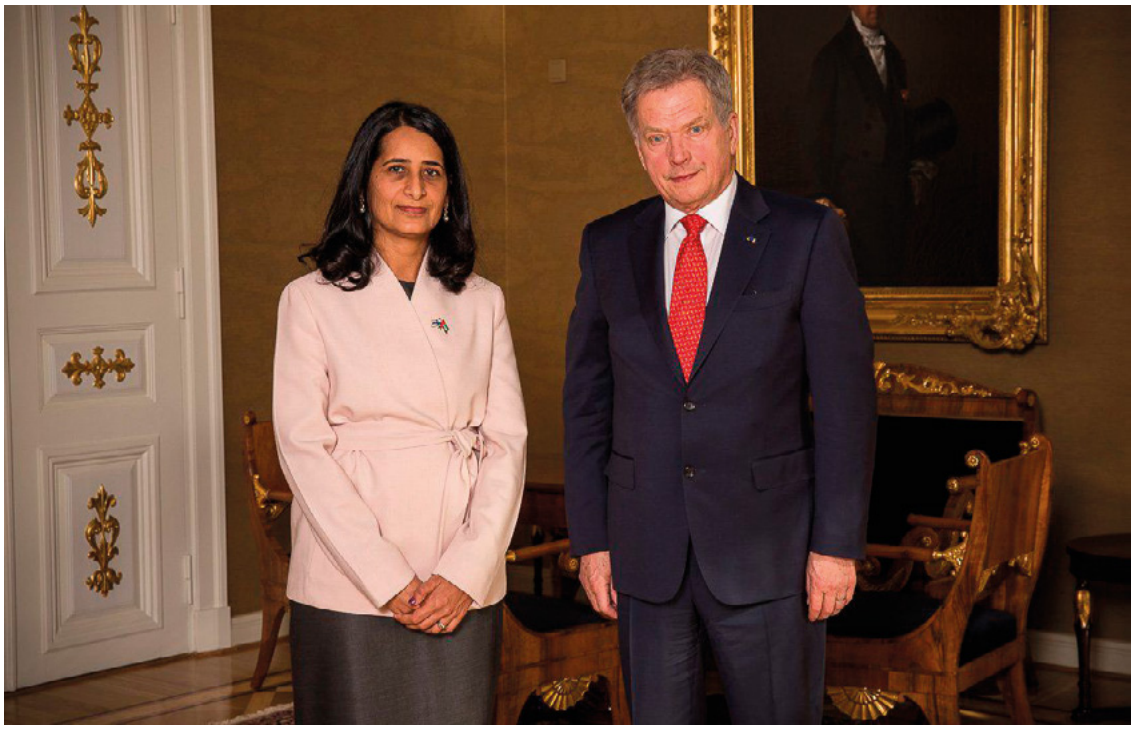
> *Diplomacy, just like many other fields, is being reshaped by digitalization and technological innovation. The UAE has emerged as a leader in modernizing diplomatic services and I am proud that, with the launch of the groundbreaking 'ePOD', the UAE Embassy in Helsinki is now one of the first embassies in the world to offer 24/7 consular services without human intervention.*

H.E. FAISAL LUFTI,
UAE ASSISTANT UNDERSECRETARY
FOR CONSULAR AFFAIRS AT THE
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



H.E. Noora Juma

UAE AMBASSADOR TO FINLAND
(2017 – 2022)



My 5-Year Journey in Finland

One of the highlights of my professional as well as personal life is my experience in Finland. I arrived in February 2017 and in spite of the dark and freezing weather, I immediately felt the warmth and peacefulness of the country and its people. I still remember the first time I breathed the fresh air in the middle of the city center.

Everyone I met from the government and business community was openly and genuinely welcoming me as the first resident Ambassador of the UAE which strongly supported my role there.

I am truly grateful for all the Finns I met and Finland in general for the great experience, the knowledge I have gained, their beautiful manners, professionalism, simplicity and for the wonderful nature.





Risto Rekola

AMBASSADOR OF FINLAND TO THE UAE (2000-2004)

Four Years of Export and Cultural Promotion

My term of office started after the turn of the century. In a couple of decades, the UAE had already become a major gateway to Asia and Africa, with Dubai as a growing trading hub hosting a number of important specialized trade fairs. However, visiting businessmen hardly knew the UAE as the fifth largest oil producer in the world and having one of the highest income per capita.

Nokia was "connecting people" all over the world. One major distribution center and sales point was located in Jebel Ali. But there were a lot of other Finnish company representatives who got together several times a year in an informal way. As Ambassador, I took active part in deliberations, noticed the need for more, and took the initiative to formalize the meetings by establishing a Finnish Business Group, which later became the Finnish Business Council.

I also had among many other things the honor of hosting and partly organizing at least four combined ministerial/business level delegations/participations to Arab Health, ATM, IDEX and Gitex.

On the cultural side, Nokia was sponsoring huge events for Bomfunk MC as well as Darude, in Abu Dhabi. I myself organized classical Finnish events like the Tempera Quartet, the young Finnish lady violinists, and got Arto Noras, a globally known cellist, to perform in the Al Ain classical music festival, and secured Finnish participation in the Abu Dhabi film festival. We also organized joint Nordic exhibitions. One of which was truly exceptional: the Finnish 'puukko' [knives], which often came with hand-made decorative sheaths to protect both the blade and the owner. They were used for woodcraft, carving or hunting purposes; some of them collector's items!

The last project was the Emirati ladies' business delegation to Finland. Mrs. Rekola took the leadership for this weeklong trip. The cultural evening organized by the Ladies was a great success. Genuine Arabic coffee, tiny cups and impressive coffee pots that were carried along as gifts charmed many high-profile visitors. Ruba Al Hassan's genuine and original jewels drew a lot of positive attention. The visit was an intercultural fairytale.

Mia Schauman

ENDURANCE RACER

> *To be part of such a proud Emirati cultural tradition was an honor I will always treasure.*

The UAE holds a very special place in my heart. I lived there for almost fourteen years with my husband and daughter, and those years were truly wonderful. Even though I am now back in Finland, I return often. Each visit feels like going home, reconnecting with my closest friends and familiar places.

My day-to-day job in the UAE was fascinating, working with Finnish MedTech companies, attending Arab Health, one of the largest health-related conferences in the world for ten years in a row, and experiencing Dubai Expo 2020 as a manager of part of the Dubai Cares Pavilion. Perhaps even more fascinating was my side-job as an endurance racer for the UAE. In this capacity, I got to experience a part of the UAE and its culture that is truly special and unique.

Like most good things in life, my story as an endurance racer in the UAE unfolded by coincidence. While riding in a smaller endurance race, I was spotted by a vet who asked me to test a particularly difficult horse. That ride ultimately led to an offer to join Al Maghaweer Stables in Abu Dhabi, owned by H.H. Sheikh Hazza bin Zayed Al Nahyan. I rode there full-time for three years, and despite the demanding schedule, with the support of my husband, the stables became my second home. I was welcomed with open arms and built friendships that remain strong to this day.

Endurance racing, the UAE's national sport, is unlike anything else in the world. Most races cover 120 km, with the pinnacle being the 160 km President's Endurance Cup, held in the Al Wathba Desert under the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan. I can still recall the sensation of riding through the desert: the sun rising at dawn, the sand carried by the wind, and the quiet, graceful strength of the horses. To be part of such a proud Emirati cultural tradition was an honor I will always treasure.

Now, back in Finland, I carry a piece of the UAE with me, most tangibly in Blitz, my rescue dog from the Saluki Center, who has been with us for eight years. More than that, I will always carry the warmth, respect, and friendships I found there.



PHOTO CREDITS: TARJA RUUSKA


حكايات كالڤلا
مارتي هافيو

Jarno Peltonen

HONORARY CHAIRMAN, FINNISH–ARABIC SOCIETY

> *The UAE seems to bravely reach the future without forgetting its heritage.*

The UAE on the Pages of Yearbook MARHABA

As the director of the Design museum and later as the Chairman of the Finnish-Arabic Society (SARAB), I have since a long time been a dedicated advocate of cultural exchanges between the UAE and Finland. As Editor-in-Chief of MARHABA, SARAB's annual yearbook from 2009 to 2024, I have also had the privilege of documenting many dimensions of the bilateral relations between the UAE and Finland. The UAE seems to bravely reach the future without forgetting its heritage.

Looking back through the MARHABA archives – where the UAE features in more than thirty articles – a vivid picture emerges of Finnish private-sector and cultural engagement with the Emirates. Many of these articles highlight Finnish expertise, from contributions to the design of Dubai's Deira Sea Corniche waterfront to the involvement of Finnish companies in Masdar City's innovative sustainable urban planning. Others recount Finland's role in building four LNG tankers for Abu Dhabi, or the floating terrace adjoining Dubai's iconic Burj Al Arab hotel, towed all the way from Finland. Education has also been a recurring theme, with articles covering Finland's "school export", Finnish schools in Abu Dhabi and Al Ain, and proposals for Finnish-designed school buildings.

Cultural exchanges have been equally rich. Highlights include the exhibition Innovative Design from Finland hosted at the Sharjah Art Museum in 1996, Oulu's designation as a sister city of Sharjah in fields such as education and technology, and a Finnish-led, UAE-funded research project on rainfall enhancement in arid regions. In 2017, at the invitation of the Sharjah Institute for Heritage, a Finnish Heritage Week with folk dance, traditional music, and exhibitions marked the centenary of Finland's independence.

Among the many projects, the translation and publication of Finland's national epic Kalevala as a version for children in collaboration with the Abu Dhabi Cultural Foundation and FILI - Finnish Literature Exchange - in 2005, stands out as especially meaningful to me. Kalevala, a collection of runic folk poetry and regarded as a symbol of Finland's national spirit and unity, was first compiled in 1849. The Embassy of Finland organized the launch event at the Abu Dhabi Cultural Center, followed by a presentation at Sharjah Heritage featuring dramatized readings from the book and kantele performances. Today, Kalevala Tales can be found in libraries across the UAE and other Arab countries.

Nina Södergård

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION LEADER

We feel fortunate to live between two nations where governments place strong emphasis on the well-being of their people and where education is highly valued.

When I was 14, my family relocated from Finland to Dubai due to my father's job. His role at the time was to develop tourism between the UAE and Finland, including establishing the first chartered flights between the two countries. We quickly settled in, adapted to a different education system, studied in English whilst learning Arabic and French, and began to build our social networks. Our initial plan was to stay in the UAE for a year, but I ended up staying for 26 years, while my parents stayed for over 30 years before returning to Finland.

Back in the 1990s, Dubai was still very different. The Finnish community in the UAE was relatively small, and everyone knew each other. It was a very active and tight-knit community. Dubain Suomi-koulu, a Finnish school club, was organized on a voluntary basis by the Finnish community and met once a week to teach children Finnish language and culture, we held community events and shared traditional Finnish dishes.

Many of those years I spent living with the Emirati family of my husband. We raised our three boys in the UAE and have always strived to have them integrated into both the Emirati and the Finnish cultures. They speak both languages, celebrate the different traditions and understand both cultures and social etiquette. This has not always been easy – we have many funny anecdotes on cultural "missteps" to tell – but it has certainly enriched our lives. And there is always common ground to be found. For example, one of the similarities that has always struck me is the shared need for the occasional peace and quiet. The Finns find it in their *mökki*, remote countryside cabins, while the Emirati love to return to the desert and spend some time in their *asbas*, small desert enclosures with tents.

We moved to Finland in 2016, and our sons are now pursuing their higher studies here. We feel fortunate to live between two nations where governments place strong emphasis on the well-being of their people and where education is highly valued. There are many areas in which the UAE and Finland can collaborate further across all sectors. As an educator, I believe greatly in the cooperation opportunities that lie ahead in the field of education, as this would bring mutual benefits and create lasting impact for both nations.



PHOTO CREDITS: TERHI KARPPINEN



> *From the UAE, I learned ambition, adaptability, and generosity. From Finland, I learned patience, independence, and the beauty of simplicity.*

PHOTO CREDITS: TERHI KARPPINEN

Yema Aldowais

STUDENT AT ARCADA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Growing up in the UAE meant being surrounded by people from all over the world, which made me open to different ways of thinking. There was a strong sense of community, the gatherings, food, and hospitality made everyone feel welcome. Moving to Finland, I carried that openness with me, even in a culture where people value more individuality and space. From the UAE, I learned ambition, adaptability, and generosity. From Finland, I learned patience, independence, and the beauty of simplicity.

Obaid Aldowais

STUDENT AT HANKEN SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

Exposure to both the Emirati and Finnish culture has been very beneficial with regards to my approach towards school, hobbies, and social activities. At school in Finland, even when there is the flexibility, I have the habit of being on time and submitting assignments on time due to the fixed scheduling habits developed in the UAE. My Emirati side has however taught me the importance of social life as well, which has helped me balance school with hobbies such as going to the gym and meeting friends on the weekend.

Maied Aldowais

STUDENT AT NOVIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

In Dubai, I enjoyed playing outside in the afternoons and going to the beach on weekends. We gathered daily with our cousins and neighbors to play football and other games and visited the grocery for snacks. Five dirhams at the time would get us plenty of treats to share. A fond memory is the one of the man on a bicycle who came by the neighborhood every afternoon to sell egg and samosa sandwiches. Our upbringing in the UAE has instilled a culture of giving and until this day I enjoy giving to others and inviting friends.

Kaarina Harkonmäki

STUDENT OF WORLD POLITICS

> *My wish for the following 50 years is an ever-growing mutual understanding between our nations, strengthening ties and connections between our two geographically faraway countries.*

A Research Trip to Never Forget

In February 2024, I travelled to Abu Dhabi, with the aim of learning more about the UAE and the themes of my Bachelor's thesis "Balancing between Modernization and Tradition". I could never have imagined what this two-week research trip to the UAE would bring me: growth, encounters, direction, and friends. During my trip, I met representatives of the government, university professors, ambassadors, as well as men and women of my age who shared more of the same experiences and hopes for the future than I did at 21.

In the early days in Abu Dhabi, I found it hard to take my eyes off the sky, decorated by the tops of skyscrapers and the dazzlingly bright sun. As evening fell, I sat in a café, with skyscrapers on one side and a mosque on the other. Only the ocean of the Gulf separated them, and I saw for the first time how modernity and tradition coexist in this country, balancing each other in the cityscape.

I will always remember the warmth of the Emiratis and the help I received from the locals to learn about their country, its history, its culture, and its people. The warmth with which my local friend introduced me to her city and shared the history of her country with me, filled with inspiration, sincerity, and pride. The warmth I felt during conversations with a young woman of my age, talking about life and everything related to it – friendship, faith, dreams, and the importance of trusting in them and in oneself.

What struck me during my trip was the universality of the values of family, friendship as well as tolerance and hope. Despite geographical distance, these are values and principles that both the people of the UAE and Finland reflect in their everyday lives. This became very clear to me when for example I visited Umm Al Emarat Park in Abu Dhabi. It was full of families enjoying their time, speaking different languages, including Arabic, English, Hindi, and French. There were young people sitting on park benches just like I did with my friends in summer at the lakefronts of my summer cottage in Finland. I thought about how in such a faraway place many things can still be so similar to those at home.



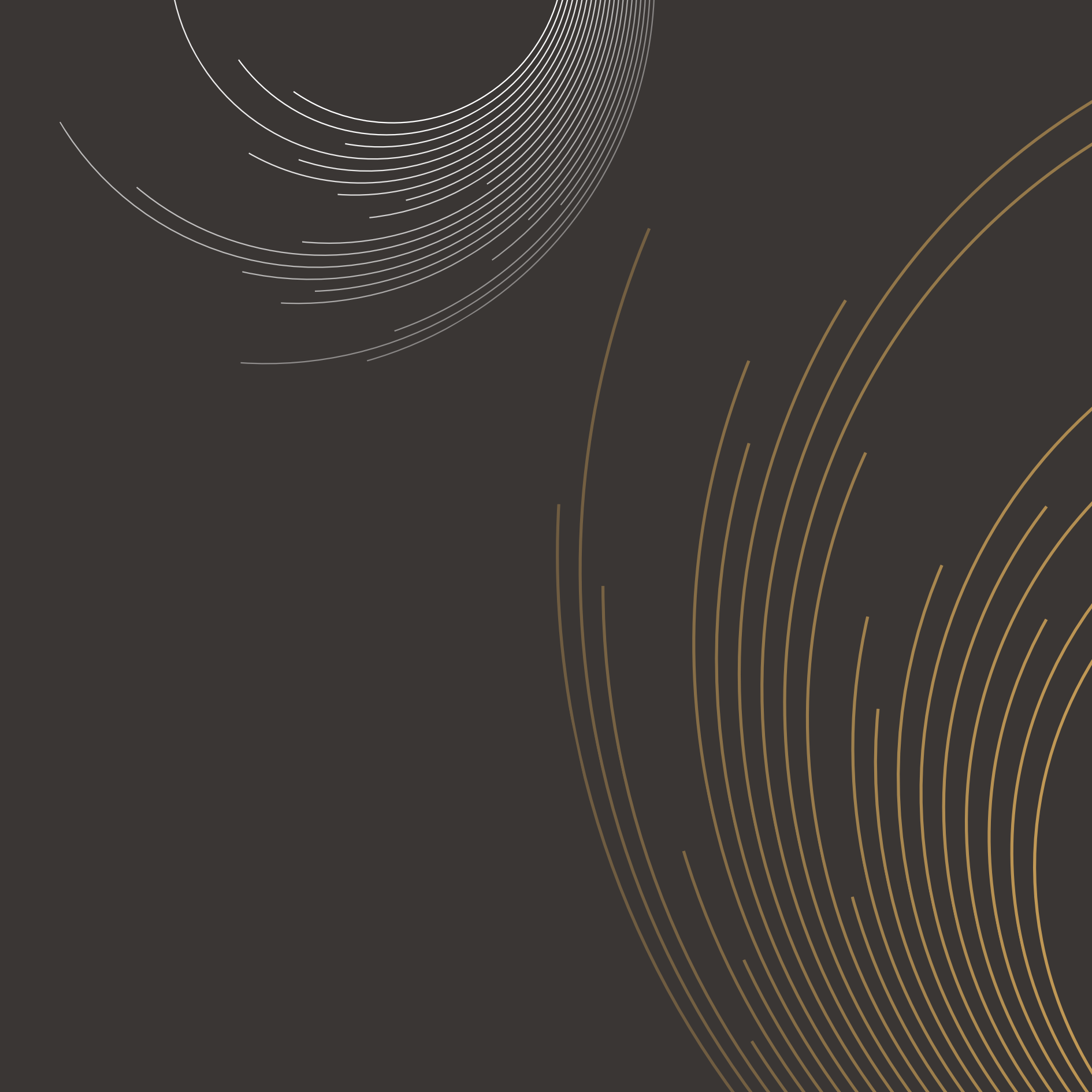






#MemoirsOfAmbassador

Coming from a country that consists of seven Emirates, I totally acknowledge and appreciate the fact that each city in Finland has its own unique story and historical significance. And thus, to better understand the history and culture of a country, you need to travel beyond the confines of the capital and major cities.



Trade & Investment

Trade & Investment

Already for four years in a row, the UAE is Finland's largest trade partner in the Gulf region.

Trade and economic cooperation have long been central to the UAE-Finland relationship, with commercial ties following a steady upward trajectory. Already for four years in a row, the UAE is Finland's largest trade partner in the Gulf region and a country of significance in working towards the UAE's goal to grow non-oil foreign trade to AED 4 trillion by 2031.

The foundations for this partnership were laid early on: in 1982, the two countries signed an Agreement on Economic, Industrial and Technical Cooperation. This was followed in 1996 by agreements on double taxation avoidance and investment protection, and in 2013 by an air services agreement. More recently, in May 2022, the UAE and Finland signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen technical and economic cooperation in the energy sector and to promote market access.

Diplomatic engagement also often focuses on advancing trade and investment. The first Joint Committee Meeting between the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland was held in January 2021 - virtually due to the COVID 19 epidemic. A second round was convened in Helsinki in November 2024. In parallel, the UAE Embassy in Helsinki, together with Business Finland, has successfully organized "Get to Know the UAE Market" roadshows across various Finnish cities in 2023 and 2024.

Building on these achievements, the two sides agreed in December 2023 to establish a Joint Business Council. The inaugural meeting of the UAE-Finnish Business Council took place in November 2024, marking another milestone in the growing economic partnership.



Key Trade & Investment Figures

$361M
UAE Imports from Finland (2024)

$8M
UAE Exports to Finland (2024)

$375M
Total Volume of Non-Oil Trade (2024)

+3.8%
Non-Oil Trade (2023 - 2024)

Finland to UAE (2023)



UAE to Finland (2023)



UAE Exports to Finland

Plastic and plastic products, aluminum and aluminum goods, organic compounds, machineries and equipment.

Finnish Exports to UAE

Ships, machineries and equipment, pulp, paper and cardboard products, as well as iron, steel and organic products.

Key Investment Sectors

Electronic components, communications, industrial equipment, non-automotive transport, software and IT services.

70
Finnish Companies Operating in the UAE (2023)

6
UAE Companies Operating in Finland (2023)

13,405
Finnish Tourists Visiting the UAE (2023)

6,021
UAE Tourists Visiting Finland (2023)



Over the past five decades, Finland and the UAE have fostered a steadfast partnership, that is ever evolving and expanding. The foundation of the relationship between our countries lies in the shared dedication to progress, innovation, and international cooperation.

Together we can set an example for how nations with diverse backgrounds and economies can collaborate for mutual prosperity.

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Finland and the UAE, I extend my heartfelt wishes for continuous fruitful cooperation between our countries.

H.E. VILLE TAVIO,
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN TRADE
AND DEVELOPMENT







With an overall trade volume of close to EUR 1 billion, the UAE is by now Finland's largest export and import partner in the region. The steady growth of commercial ties between our countries reflects our shared interests across a wide range of sectors, including energy and sustainability, defense technology, telecommunications, health care, and education.

Whenever I am in Finland, I am reminded that while Emirati and Finnish business cultures may differ in many ways, their essentials bring us together: bold entrepreneurship combined with simplicity and humility, and decision-making founded on trust and enduring relationships.

H.E. SAEED AL HAJERI,
UAE MINISTER OF STATE



Severi Keinälä

COMMISSIONER GENERAL, FINLAND PAVILION, EXPO 2020 DUBAI
DIRECTOR, FINLAND PAVILION, COP28 DUBAI

Expo 2020 Dubai provided a splendid platform for further deepening the relationship between the UAE and Finland, to enhance the business cooperation, as well as to broaden my personal understanding of the country and its people.

Serving as the Commissioner General for the Finland Pavilion "Snow Cape" at the Expo 2020 Dubai and Finland Pavilion Director at COP28, I had the great opportunity and honor to meet with a large number of UAE dignitaries and to interact with the most pleasant, dedicated and professional Emiratis, as well as professionals from all around our beautiful planet.

Gender equality in the UAE has advanced by leaps and bounds since the late 90s, when I worked on Finland's relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council, mainly with the most capable men of the UAE. The entire Expo organization had both genders well represented and in Expo my key contact persons were women. First and foremost, H.E. Reem Al Hashimy's gentle but firm leadership of the Expo Steering Committee and her handling of challenges like the COVID 19 epidemic during the Expo period was most admirable. Equally pleasant and most professional was the cooperation with both UAE ambassadors to Finland, H.E. Amna Fikri and her predecessor, H.E. Noora Mohammed Juma. I would dare to claim that along with our professional cooperation we managed to establish not only mutual respect, but also long-lasting friendships.

Personally, I cannot think of any other single event, during the first 50 years of our diplomatic relations, that would have had a greater positive impact on the UAE-Finland relations than Expo 2020 Dubai. The sheer number of high-level visits and business delegations traveling between our countries was impressive. This has enhanced mutual understanding, exposed new opportunities and resulted in increased business transactions in trade and investments between our nations.

Our nations share many important values, but at the same time we have considerable differences in our natural environments, resources and the structure of our economic and business landscapes. Our shared values form a great base for exploring opportunities that the differences in our societies provide. Personally, I see a huge potential in increasing trade and investments between the UAE and Finland. There are also unlimited opportunities in innovation cooperation and cultural exchange.

I highly appreciate the opportunity I have had to contribute to UAE-Finland relations and I am happy to continue doing so when the opportunity arises.



Personally, I see a huge potential in increasing trade and investments between the UAE and Finland. There are also unlimited opportunities in innovation cooperation and cultural exchange.



Jyri Häkämies

DIRECTOR GENERAL, CONFEDERATION OF FINNISH INDUSTRIES (EK)

> *I believe that we have a lot to achieve together. Let's deepen cooperation and be open to new ideas.*

My first contact with the UAE was made when I served as Finland's Minister of Defense from 2007 to 2011. I made two trips to the UAE with the aim of selling defense technology company Patria's personnel carriers so that part of the manufacturing would take place in the UAE. At the defense industry fair, I met with the leadership of the UAE army and also with H.H. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

I became the Director General of the Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK) in 2012. Also in my current work, the UAE is an important partner for Finland, both from the perspective of export promotion as well as investment promotion. Finland has interesting high-tech expertise that is suitable for the UAE market and brings innovative solutions, including for combating climate change.

In 2015, I was part of an official business delegation during the State Visit of President H.E. Sauli Niinistö to the UAE. The visit was hosted by H.H. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and the focus was on technological cooperation, the defense industry and the promotion of investments. At the reception of the State Visit, H.H. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan told me that he was interested in national military service and was planning a trip to Sweden in that context. I told him national military service was abolished in Sweden, but in Finland it is still going strong. Indeed, as the global security situation has deteriorated, we in Finland are very pleased that we as a state and as a society have continuously developed the country's defense capabilities and the overall security of society.

I have always been interested and partly amazed by how the UAE is purposefully investing in new technology - with the aim of implementing the transition from oil to renewable energy. There is a good match with Finland, which is also investing in technology and new solutions, including in energy. Both countries are cooperation builders. The expertise of our countries complements each other and forms a good basis for deepening economic and technological cooperation.

I believe that we have a lot to achieve together. Let's deepen cooperation and be open to new ideas. Together, Finland's technological expertise and the UAE's investment capacity can open up markets for Finnish and Emirati companies, including in third countries on different continents.

Johanna Riihimaa

FORMER TRADE COUNSELLOR,
EMBASSY OF FINLAND IN ABU DHABI

UAE - My Second Home: Always Striving to Achieve Its Goals and Vision

In 2002, I embarked on a life-changing journey when I moved from Finland to Dubai. Over the course of 13 years in the UAE, I had the privilege of working for the Dubai Airport Free Zone Authority (DAFZ) under the Government of Dubai, the Finnish elevator and escalator company KONE, and the Embassy of Finland in Abu Dhabi. What an exciting and diverse journey it has been! Not only did it deepen my knowledge of international business, it also offered invaluable insights into the UAE's fascinating culture, its amazing people, hospitality, and the remarkable growth of the nation.

During my time at DAFZ, I was honored to be part of the UAE team working to attract international companies and foreign direct investment to Dubai. It was a privilege to contribute to the growth that helped solidify Dubai's position as a regional hub for trade, finance, and logistics. My experience at KONE was equally fascinating, as we witnessed and played a role in the rapid expansion of the country's real estate sector.

The professional excitement continued when I returned to the UAE in 2021, transitioning from the private sector to the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs as a Trade Counsellor at the Embassy of Finland in Abu Dhabi. It was an honor to work closely with the Ambassador, our Embassy team, and colleagues from Business Finland to promote Finnish exports, strengthen bilateral trade relations, ties with UAE partners, and support Finnish companies in the UAE market.

The UAE has experienced remarkable progress since my arrival in 2002. In addition to numerous ministerial visits, business delegations, and work to support Finnish exports, there were some events that truly stood out. One event to remember was Finland's participation in the Dubai World Expo 2020, where over 100 Finnish companies showcased their expertise. Another highlight was Finland's participation in the COP28 UN climate conference in Dubai, where we proudly hosted Finland's first-ever country pavilion.

Many significant personal and business relations have been formed over the years. Thank you to the UAE teams, companies and friends in both countries for the excellent years of collaboration. Once again, my congratulations to the UAE and Finland for the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations. May our friendship continue to deepen for the success and happiness of our people in both countries.





Kai Malmivaara

RETIRED LAWYER & BUSINESSMAN

“

Indeed, in my view, the UAE offers a package that is very hard to beat.

I first set foot in Dubai in 1983 and spent much of the 1980s between Dubai and Sharjah. The skyline then was nothing like today, yet the atmosphere was just as pleasant and exciting. At the time, the World Trade Center area was the beating heart of the city, with business activity focused mainly on oil and aviation.

When I returned in the early 2000s, I was astonished by the scale of transformation underway. Working for a Finnish company specializing in premium marina construction, I had the privilege of witnessing Dubai’s rapid development up close. Numerous marina projects were taking shape, and together with our excellent local partners we were able to grow the business. Remarkably, even then about 99% of the materials were sourced locally - the real added value from Finland lay in our engineering expertise.

Dubai’s transformation was driven by visionary leadership, bold decision-making, and a readiness to test new ideas. I still recall the words of H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who once told his audience: “I don’t want you to aspire for anything less than first place, because there is number one, and no one remembers who came second.” As a result, the UAE finds itself at the forefront across sectors ranging from tourism and health care to transportation, energy, and cutting-edge technologies such as AI.

Today, my wife and I have chosen to spend our retirement here, while enjoying the summers in Finland with its pristine nature and fresh air. Of course, the UAE’s financial advantages play a role, but they are only part of the story. Equally compelling are its international outlook, its inclusiveness, its culture of tolerance and respect, and its security. Indeed, in my view, the UAE offers a package that is very hard to beat.

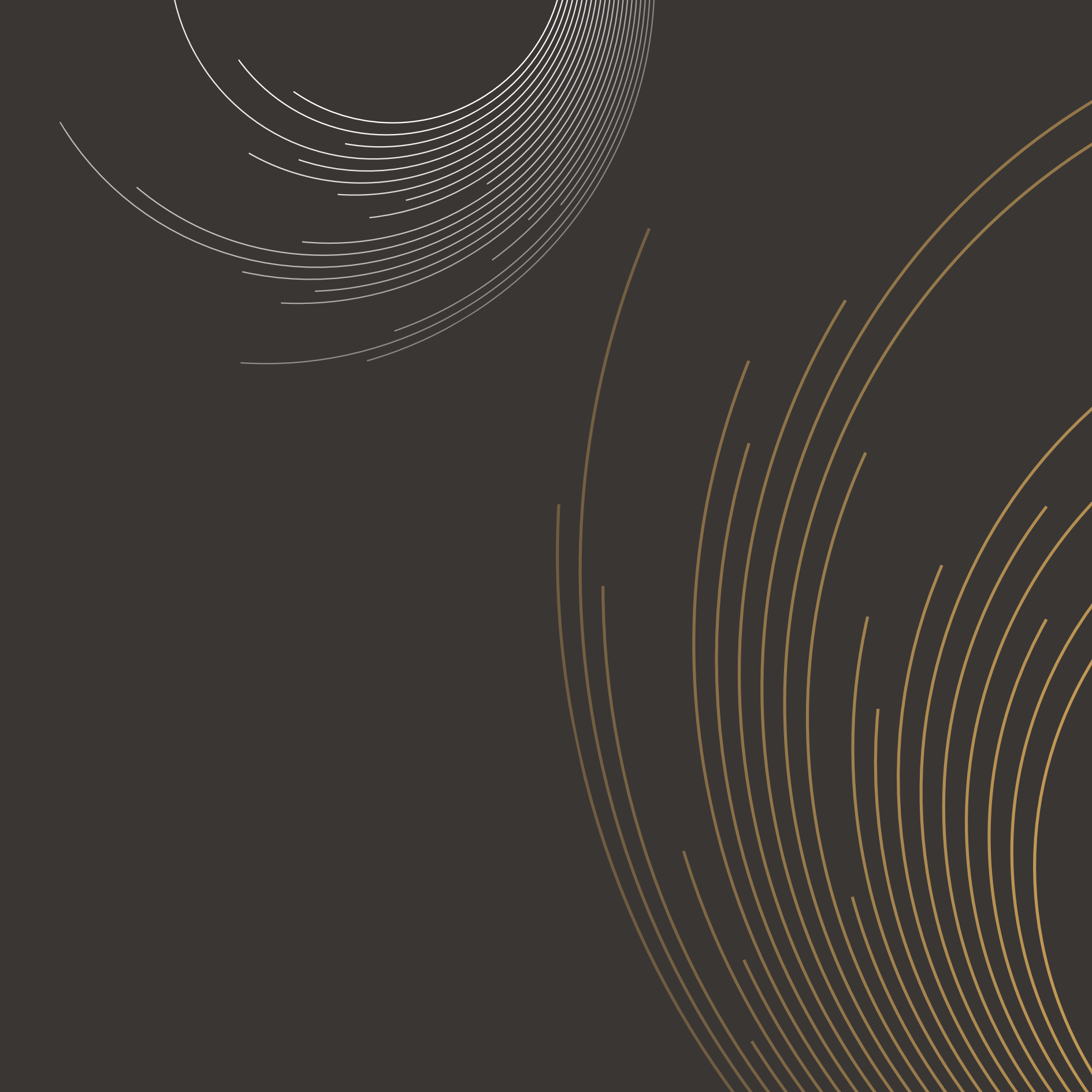



مذكرة تفاهم بين إنفستوبيا و بيزنس فينلاند
MOU between Investopia and Business Finland
investopia



#MemoirsOfAmbassador

Finland is the home of many well-established and successful family-owned businesses, which is something I did not know before, but resonated well with me! As you might know, family-owned businesses are also an important backbone of the UAE economy as up to 90% of private companies in the UAE are family businesses. Both the UAE and Finland share a common value of appreciating and respecting the role of family-owned businesses in promoting the prosperity of the economy, society and beyond.



Technology, Science & Space

Technology, Science & Space

There is a shared understanding that technological innovation is, and will remain, a core driver of prosperity, wellbeing, and the safety and security of nations.

The UAE and Finland are both nations with a strong focus on the future. There is a shared understanding that technological innovation is, and will remain, a core driver of prosperity, wellbeing, and the safety and security of nations. The UAE aims to be a global leader in fields like artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain and robotics. With missions such as the "Hope Probe" to Mars, the UAE has also proven itself to be a space power of significance.

All these areas have witnessed numerous solid collaborations and fruitful partnerships between Emirati and Finnish entities. The recognition of the vast opportunities for UAE-Finland technology cooperation goes back many decades. For example, in 1995 a high-level Finnish armed forces delegation, accompanied by ten Finnish companies, attended the second edition of the renowned biennial International Defense Exhibition and Conference (IDEX) in Abu Dhabi. Finland still has an active participation at IDEX as the bilateral partnership in this field remains strong.

Today, scientific and technology-focused partnerships between the two countries are thriving. There is a shared interest in research and applications across areas including quantum computing, AI, decarbonization, clean energy development, life sciences, logistics, and smart city planning. UAE entities such as the Advanced Technology Research Council (ATRC), Technology Innovation Institute (TII), Khalifa University (KU), Emirates Research and Development Council (ERDC), G42, e&, and EDGE have built strong collaborations with Finnish counterparts including Nokia, VTT Technical Research Centre, University of Oulu's 6G Flagship Program, and IQM Quantum Computers.

In recent years, cooperation has also expanded into space-based research. One example that stands out is the partnership between the UAE's Space42 and Finland's ICEYE, which sees Emirati engineers train alongside Finnish engineers designing, building, and operating satellites. In 2024, following a series of successful joint projects, the two companies established a joint venture, focusing on satellite manufacturing in the UAE, as well as the deployment of satellite missions.




NOKIA



“In the fields of science and advanced technology, the UAE and Finland speak the same language – one of ambition, creativity, expertise, and opportunity.

Our engagement with Finland has shown that when Emirati and Finnish tech minds come together, the results can be truly groundbreaking. Our cooperation in this field has been growing, and I am certain this will continue in the decades to come.

H.E. OMRAN SHARAF,
ASSISTANT FOREIGN MINISTER
FOR ADVANCED SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY





“The close cooperation between Finland and the UAE has evolved over decades across multiple sectors. At the core of this relationship are bilateral trade and investments, particularly in high and disruptive technologies.

The UAE holds a key position in global markets as a hub for telecommunications trade, making it a strategic partner for Finnish tech companies. This collaboration has also been highlighted in international forums, like at the first World Expo hosted in the Arab world, Finland’s pavilion focused on the theme of circular economy, underscoring shared goals in promoting sustainable development.

H.E. JARNO SYRJÄLÄ,
UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE
OF FINLAND

Dr. Markku Wilenius

FUTURIST

> *The UAE and Finland share the identity of young nations, once dominated by others, yet both have transformed that history into a drive to build societies well above average standards.*

From a futurist perspective, the UAE is a fascinating place. I was lucky to spend two years in Dubai as the Director of the Dubai Future Forum (2020-2022). In my view, Dubai remains the best example of how the future can be created. Dubai was still a small fishing town in the early 1970s, and now it is a true metropole. The UAE Leadership implemented the concept of "build and they will come" in ways that went well beyond the imagination of most people.

The ambition and pace have left a lasting impression on me. It is something that I share with my Finnish students on a regular basis. Perhaps what struck me most was the "mega-leap" the UAE was taking in terms of embracing new technologies and digitalization. Elsewhere, new technologies such as AI, blockchain and crypto were initially regarded with caution, but the UAE did not hesitate to embrace the potential of how these technologies could improve many aspects of society and public services. As just one example, already years ago, it took only minutes to convert my Finnish driver's license into a UAE license.

My time in Dubai brought not only professional growth, but also personal growth. While I can consider myself a globetrotter, the UAE was an unknown to me. I experienced the true multiculturalism of Dubai, which blends seamlessly with a deeply rooted local culture. I also experienced first-handed the strong position young Emirati women have gained in society.

The level of women's empowerment reminded me of the situation at home in Finland. But that was not the only similarity I encountered. The UAE and Finland share the identity of young nations, once dominated by others, yet both have transformed that history into a drive to build societies well above average standards. I believe this is an excellent base for the UAE and Finland to find joint opportunities in the future.




KATO
050-3682713
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Antti Rahikka

REGIONAL DIRECTOR, BUSINESS FINLAND

UAE Memories from 2006 - 2009

I initially thought writing a short text about my experiences in the UAE would be easy since I lived and travelled in the UAE for almost 18 years. There are a lot of memories and stories for sure! But then, it became obvious to me that during such a long time, it had become my everyday life and what do we record of our everyday life? Way too little! We are just busy commuting, working, crying and laughing – living.

Then again, there are a lot of stories!

I first moved to the UAE on 1 April 2006. Like many of us who became longtime residents, the initial move was "just for a few months". This was at the start of the project of Du Telecom to launch a mobile network. Nokia had won the radio access network contract for the project, which saw many Finns move to the UAE or at least get acquainted with the country. Nokia's office was located in the Dubai Islamic Bank building in Dubai's Internet City. At any given moment, you would find a few fellow Finns in the food courts around the area. I was never a Nokia employee myself, but we were all working on the same projects and hence it felt like family. "Nokia – Connecting People!" remains a good reminder of how important trade is, also for individuals.

One specific memory I would like to highlight is from Dubai Downtown. My employer at the time was supplying hardware to Du and we faced some technical difficulties with our product. The site was where now Business Bay is located, with all the glitzy hotels and offices. But at that time ... it was practically desert. And this was only about 15 years ago, with this photo taken on 30 September 2009 as a witness. Our multinational team put a lot of hard work and sweat into putting the tower in place. I noticed it was still there some years ago, but I believe by now it has made space for something more important.

Rafal Modrzewski

CEO & CO-FOUNDER, ICEYE

Toni Pöllänen

CHIEF OF STAFF TO THE CEO, ICEYE

ICEYE x UAE: Faster. Bolder. Higher.

The UAE is one of the prime spots globally for growing business and at ICEYE, the global leader in earth observation satellites, we see similarities how the UAE operates and how we operate. The country has built its progress on ambitious ideas, decisive execution, and a determination to move fast, embracing new technologies. These are the very same qualities that define ICEYE as a company.

The world's most successful growth companies - Amazon, Tesla, Apple - have been founder-led. They thrived because they could take risks and scale quickly. We see the UAE in a similar way: a founder-led nation, guided by leadership that is willing to make bold choices and deliver at speed. ICEYE was born from the same spirit. We continue to build our business on the belief that speed matters, and that ambitious goals can be turned into reality.

This shared mindset is why our partnership with Abu Dhabi–based Space42 has advanced so quickly. Together, we already created the UAE's first Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) satellite program demonstrating how local UAE capabilities can be built through collaboration.

Building on that foundation, in December 2024, we launched a joint venture to assemble and operate satellites in the UAE. At Space42's new facility in Abu Dhabi, Emirati engineers now work side by side with ICEYE experts to design, build, and operate these satellites. This is a pathway to sovereign space capability, creating high-tech jobs, strengthening local supply chains, and ensuring knowledge and expertise remain in the UAE for the long term.

Earlier this year, we were honored to host H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan at our headquarters in Finland. During that visit, Emirati engineers working alongside ICEYE teams highlighted what this partnership really means – two groups of people, from different parts of the world, combining their strengths to build something new.

For ICEYE, the UAE is a place where visions are turned into real capabilities. We are proud to play a role in this journey and look forward to contributing to the next 50 years of UAE–Finland cooperation in space and technology.



The UAE is a place where visions are turned into real capabilities.


ICEYE




الشريك الوطني
National Partner
KONE
الشريك الرئيسي
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Wärtsilä Fiskars Konecranes
Metso Outotec Nokia Fortum ISKU
Collaprime Neles Black Donuts
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Finnish Water Forum Flexbright Health Comes from Finland
JedX Medcare LAHQUA Liana Technologies Logonet
LuxTurrim5G Ecosystem Marinetek Naava
SITRA Stone From Finland Visit Finland

KONE

KONE and the UAE: Building the Future Together

For over five decades, the UAE has grown from a bold vision into one of the most connected, vibrant, and forward-thinking nations in the world.

For more than 30 years, KONE has been an integral part of the UAE's journey of visionary leadership and transformative progress – working hand-in-hand with our customers in the region, combining Finnish innovation, quality, and technology to create safe, smooth, and sustainable People Flow in the places where life happens. From cultural landmarks to bustling malls and iconic destinations, we have helped shape the way millions of people live, work, and travel in the region. Some of the projects we are proud to have contributed to include Cayan Tower, Dubai Expo 2020, Azizi Venice, and the Franck Muller Aeternitas residential clock tower in Dubai Marina, among many others.

KONE has been part of the fabric of Finland since 1910. Our success in the UAE has in large part been due to shared values between the two nations. Although distinct in geography and culture, the UAE and Finland share a deep commitment to innovation, sustainable development, and future-focused thinking. Today, KONE UAE is proud to have around 700 employees from diverse backgrounds, delivering innovative solutions at hundreds of sites.

"Having worked in the UAE for many years, I have witnessed how the country has become a global example of visionary leadership and rapid progress," says Samer Halabi, EVP Asia Pacific, Middle East & Africa, KONE. "The UAE shows how collaboration, innovation, and openness to new ideas can transform cities and create opportunities for people, businesses, and communities alike. It is a privilege to be part of this journey alongside KONE."

"From day one, the UAE has impressed us with its boldness, resilience, and openness to new ideas – a place where people from all walks of life come together, where infrastructure inspires, and where progress and innovation is matched by a deep respect for heritage," says Loay Dajani, Managing Director of KONE Middle East, Türkiye and Africa.

The UAE's investments in AI, digital infrastructure and governance give us an indication of the future of making cities better places to live. The fields of AI and emerging technologies for example will require shared learning and joint innovation. This provides a powerful foundation for further collaboration. Our commitment to innovation, sustainability, and safety will continue to guide us as we support the UAE's vision for the future.

Ahmad Darwish

QUANTUM TECHNOLOGY STUDENT,
AALTO UNIVERSITY

This, to me, symbolized the interwoven technological relation between the UAE and Finland, a relation that persists as a shining model for how innovation is achieved through cooperation.

When you first hear the titles "the land of a thousand skyscrapers" and "the land of a thousand lakes", you expect that these two lands are, by all measures, antipodes. After all, one is known for its vibrant urban energy, defined by bustling oasis-like metropolises, while the other is known for its tranquil harmony with nature, characterized by serene communities carved from forests and lakes.

In spite of these differences, both have, in their own regards, become regional gems with a shared commitment to technological advancement. Over the 50 years of technological cooperation between the UAE and Finland, both nations have evolved into global leaders in fields such as telecommunications, digital governance, and quantum technology.

As a quantum technology student in Finland, who was born and raised in the UAE, my academic journey has been actively molded by this cooperative link. In December 2023, I got my first taste of the quantum field in the UAE with a tour of the quantum labs of the Technology Innovation Institute (TII). Having begun my journey as a university student in Finland only months prior, the tour followed a period of uncertainty as to whether studying quantum technology was the right decision. Upon touring the facility and speaking to researchers, I was comforted by how much the UAE had prioritized quantum research in its national research program. Having been assured of my field's vast potential in the UAE, I returned to Finland more excited and motivated than ever.

Carrying this excitement with me, in June 2025, I got the opportunity to work as a research assistant for a research group at Aalto University. During the office tour, I was guided to the laboratory housing the group's quantum computers. As soon as I stepped into this room, I was taken back to TII's laboratory as I noticed the name of the same Finnish company plastered on the cryostats. This, to me, symbolized the interwoven technological relation between the UAE and Finland, a relation that persists as a shining model for how innovation is achieved through cooperation. Although the UAE and Finland may be over four thousand kilometers apart, they are as close as can be when it comes to cooperation in quantum research, with them progressing side by side, sharing the same goal: the betterment of humanity.



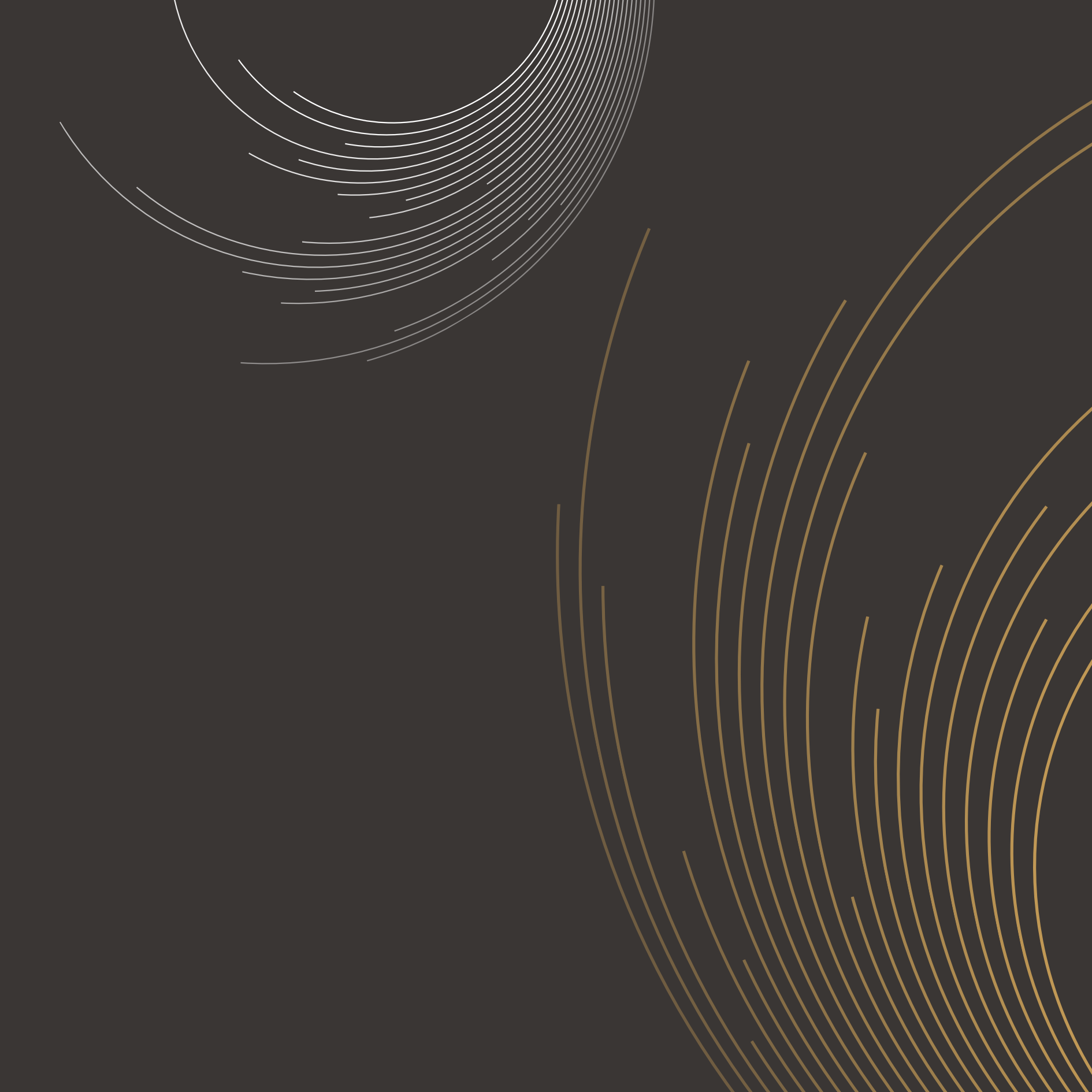

ON AIR


NOKIA



#MemoirsOfAmbassador

During the Business Road Shows I conducted, I saw that each single Finnish city, just like each single Emirate, has its unique economic features and offers something different as a potential partner, in particular in the field of advanced sciences and technology.



Peace, Security & Conflict Mediation

Peace, Security & Conflict Mediation

The UAE and Finland share a deep appreciation for the importance of cooperation, dialogue, and coexistence in addressing evolving global challenges.

As two nations shaped by challenging climates and regional dynamics, the UAE and Finland share a deep appreciation for the importance of cooperation, dialogue, and coexistence in addressing evolving global challenges. Both countries have long recognized diplomacy and mediation as strategic areas of strength, grounded in a shared commitment to fostering peace across nations and continents. The UAE's efforts in mediation have borne fruit, for example, in terms of prisoner exchanges between Ukraine and Russia, in Somalia, between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and between India and Pakistan.

There is a common understanding that effective diplomacy and mediation must be flexible and able to engage with diverse cultural, religious, and societal contexts. The shared perspective has laid a strong foundation for collaboration in peacebuilding and knowledge sharing between our Ministries of Foreign Affairs, as well as across various Emirati and Finnish institutions. Notably, in 2023, the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy (AGDA) signed two MoUs - one with the CMI-Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation and another with Finn Church Aid (FCA).

These partnerships have enabled inspiring initiatives, such as the interfaith Iftar organized by the UAE Embassy in Helsinki in March 2025. Under the theme "Tolerance and Coexistence in Current-Day Foreign Policy and Diplomacy," the event brought together spiritual leaders from across Finland and featured keynote addresses by H.E. Omar Ghobash, UAE Ambassador to the Holy See and Advisor to the UAE Foreign Minister, and H.E. Pekka Haavisto, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland and active Member of the Finnish Parliament.

An emerging area of cooperation between the UAE and Finland focuses on transboundary water disputes, which are increasingly recognized as critical issues for international peace and security. The UAE, as host of the 2026 UN Water Conference, is exploring how its diplomatic leadership, in collaboration with key partners such as Finland, can support a constructive role in resolving water disputes.





Finland is an inspiration. A small country with a remarkable history of resilience and innovation. We learn from each other, including in the field of peace mediation and promoting tolerance.

H.E. OMAR GHOBASH,
UAE AMBASSADOR TO THE HOLY SEE AND ADVISOR TO THE UAE FOREIGN MINISTER



In recent years, the focus of mediation has shifted increasingly toward the Gulf countries. Within this group, the UAE has a particularly important role due to its history and international relations. Finland and the UAE can, in the future, engage in even closer cooperation in the field of mediation. The connections between the Finnish civil society sector and the UAE have also become increasingly active.

H.E. PEKKA HAAVISTO,
MP, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND (2019-2023)

H.E. Nickolay Mladenov

DIRECTOR-GENERAL, ANWAR
GARGASH DIPLOMATIC ACADEMY

Both countries share the conviction that conflict resolution requires patience, discretion, and persistence, as well as a readiness to listen more than to speak.

Mediation is fast becoming part of the Gulf's diplomatic identity that is rooted in traditions of dialogue and reconciliation and shaped by the realities of an ever more uncertain world. Gulf states have stepped forward to fill gaps left by traditional powers. The UAE exemplifies this shift. Its mediation efforts, whether facilitating peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea, enabling prisoner-of-war exchanges, or advancing humanitarian access to Gaza, are anchored in an approach that blends cultural tradition with pragmatic statecraft.

Two concepts are central to this ethos. The Emirati *majlis* provides the setting: a space where dialogue is personal, respectful, and removed from the glare of public confrontation. *Sulh*, the Arabic notion of reconciliation, provides the framework: the belief that mediation is about restoring relationships, not just about closing deals. Together, they underpin a style of diplomacy that values discretion, consensus, and trust-building, qualities that often are in short supply in an era of omnipresent social media and societal polarization.

The UAE's approach is also strategic. As a nation that aspires to economic diversification and long-term stability, it recognizes that prosperity depends on peace. Ports, trade routes, and energy corridors are inseparable from political dialogue. Mediation thus serves both a national and regional purpose: securing stability while creating conditions for shared growth. The UAE's style is not prescriptive, but consensus-driven; not coercive, but facilitative. It seeks win-win outcomes, relying on relationships and credibility rather than on pressure or conditionality.

In this respect, there is a natural affinity with Finland's respected tradition of mediation. Both countries share the conviction that conflict resolution requires patience, discretion, and persistence, as well as a readiness to listen more than to speak. Both recognize that mediation is not a single act, but a sustained process of reconciliation and inclusion.

At the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy, we prepare the next generation of diplomats to carry forward this ethos. We emphasize that mediation is a craft that links stability to development, bridges divides across cultures and builds resilience in an unsettled world. As the UAE and Finland celebrate fifty years of diplomatic ties, they do so with a shared belief that mediation and preventive diplomacy are not peripheral to international relations, but central to peace in our time.

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derstanding Between Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy and CMI-MARTTI AHTISAARI PE
CMI
MARTTI AHTISAARI
ANWAR GARGASH

CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation



Over the years CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation and the Embassy of the UAE in Finland, as well as distinguished UAE interlocutors have had very enriching and inspiring discussions on peace mediation and how the field is evolving. We have discussed for instance the role of smaller states in today's shifting global landscape.

Both Finland and the UAE share a tradition of building bridges and being future-oriented, and in our conversations, it has become clear how vital such efforts are in today's fragmented landscape. For an organization such as CMI, founded in Finland, these discussions have opened new perspectives on our place within the wider peacemaking ecosystem.

Looking ahead, our wish for the next 50 years is that our relations will deepen further, and that together we can not only promote dialogue and diplomacy but also safeguard and expand multilateral spaces for exchange. In this way, our shared efforts can yield concrete and lasting contributions, both regionally and globally.

Lt. Gen. (Retired) Markku Koli

FINNISH DEFENSE FORCES

UAE's National Service - A Program Second to None

It has been said that the National Service in the UAE is the most significant social reform in the Middle East in decades. It has been the fastest successful implementation of mandatory military service since the Korean War. In addition to these, it is the largest co-operative Finnish education export program of all time.

National Service in the UAE is just over 10 years old. The Anniversary celebration was one of the main highlights of the 53rd National Day, with 20 thousand conscripts taking their oath of allegiance to the nation in one place at the same time. The audience was witnessing an event more impressive than any globally comparable one in years.

An impressive number of Emirati men and women have gone through a comprehensive training and education system, which was created in only a few years. A system, which is developing every day, is an achievement that will not be repeated soon in any peaceful nation, anywhere in the world.

The success of National Service is a combination of several simultaneous things: extremely strong national support, both by the national leadership and citizens, a powerful program and change management, the right people in the right places, and utilization of existing knowledge and experience.

To be involved in such a revolutionary endeavor is not only an honor and a privilege, but also a professional opportunity par excellence. An opportunity, which is not limited to utilizing decades of experience, but also requiring and facilitating a robust cultural adaptation of values, practices, and principles.

This would not be possible without trusted collaboration, open dialogue, everlasting comparison of priorities, practices, and options, and fast and determined decision-making. Creating a carbon copy of an existing system would have been easier.

National Service, however, needed to be an Emirati program, with an Emirati implementation, and as such, a new strong source of Emirati pride. By these features, it presents a new strength to be added to the deterrent powers of the UAE.

I stated in the First National Service Conference that "someday, other nations will be benchmarking us". This has indeed taken place. What they cannot benchmark, though, is what matters most. They cannot copy outstanding peer-to-peer working relationships, openness to new approaches, and motivational leadership. They cannot imitate the "dream team", which was able to achieve the almost unachievable.



Jussi Ojala

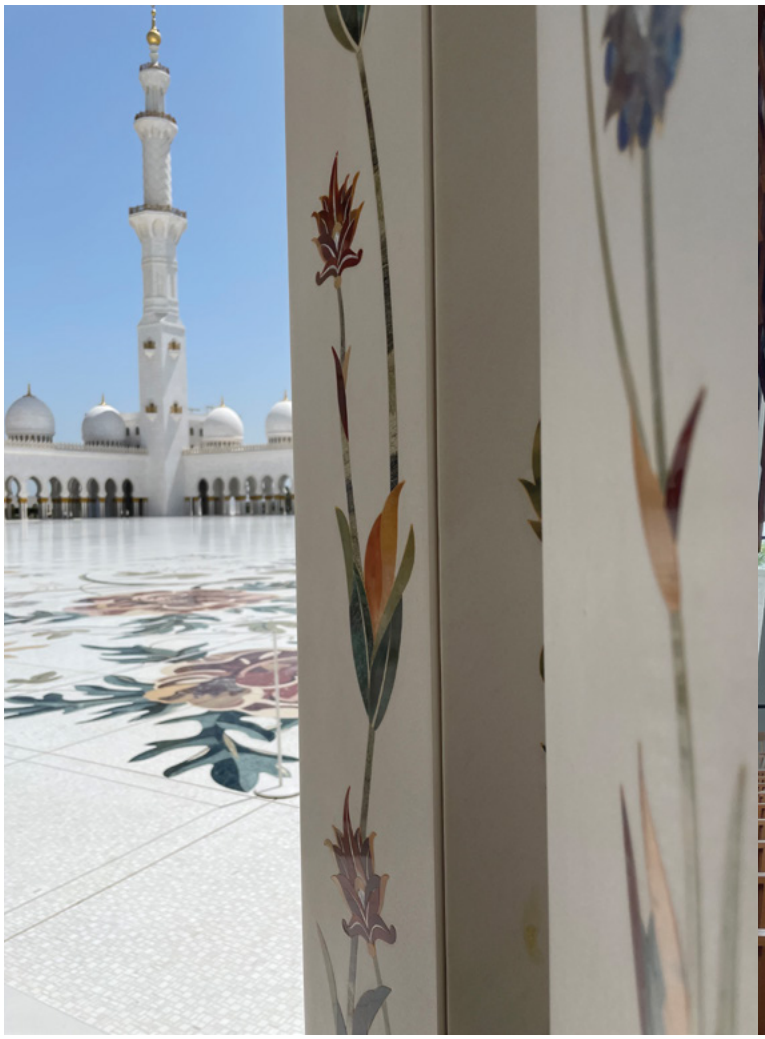
EXECUTIVE REPRESENTATIVE, GULF COOPERATION AND
FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT, FINN CHURCH AID



Tolerance as Proactive Calling for Good

While tolerance is a virtue globally, in the UAE, tolerance or تسامح (*tasāmuḥ*), has a significantly deeper meaning. This is what I have come to learn during recent years, as I have had the privilege of staying in the UAE and learning from its people. With its roots firmly in Islam, and in heritage of the founding father H.H. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, tolerance could not stand on firmer ground. Tolerance cuts across the Emirati history, culture, politics and everyday life, and it facilitates effortlessly dialogue amongst all of them. Contrary to its English and Finnish translations, tasāmuh is proactive with its call for mercy, acceptance of the "other," peaceful coexistence, and forgiving others. The difference, however, is not only semantic, but it has a real world meaning.

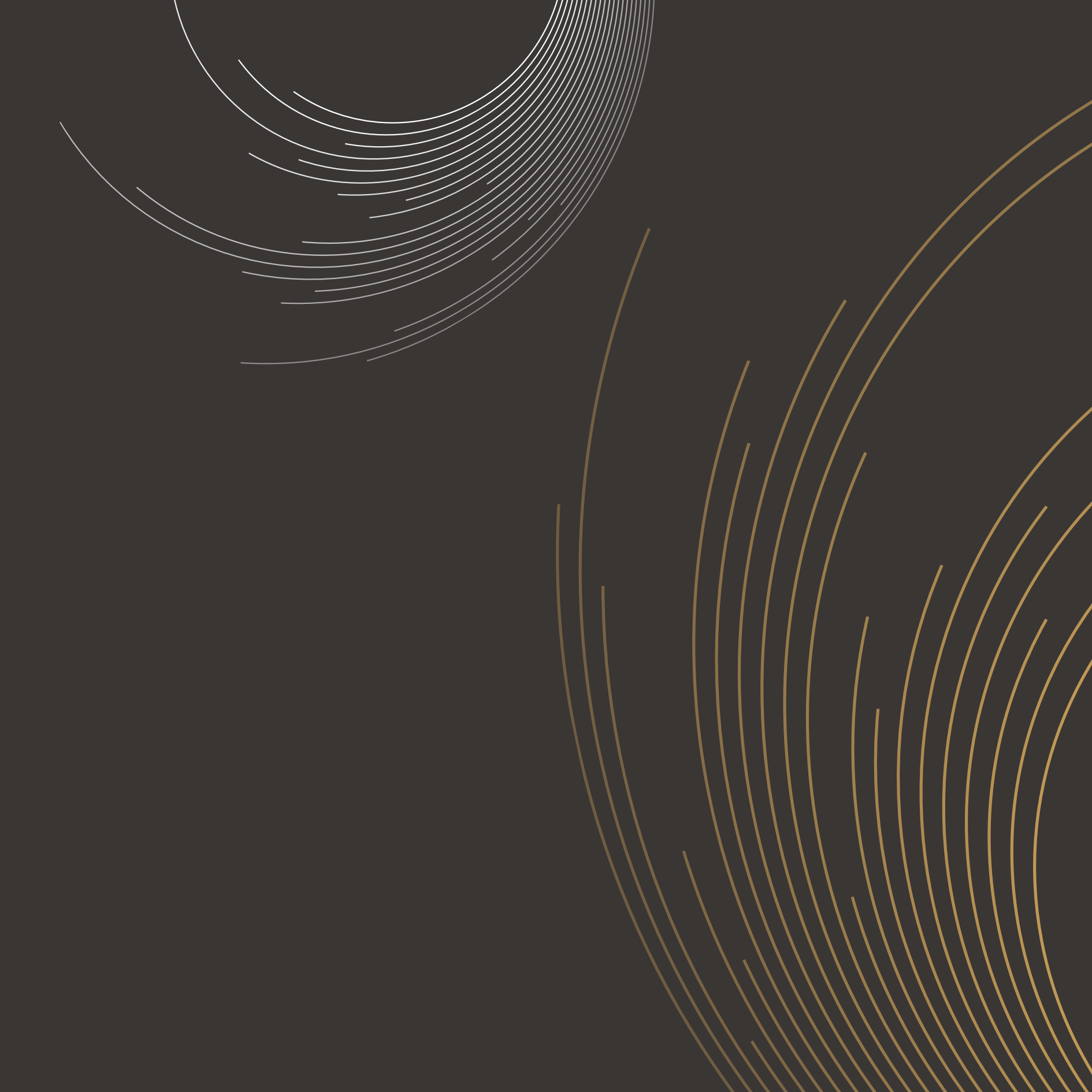
At Finn Church Aid, Finland's largest international aid organization, we have observed how the UAE has taken the notion of tolerance from theory to practice through the creation of a dedicated Ministry; we





have had the honor to engage with the UAE's Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, H.H Sheikh Nahayan Al Nahyan, and we have witnessed the unique convening power for good that the national prioritization for tolerance has. We have walked the "Tolerance Path" to the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi. We have seen how the UAE's understanding of tolerance has already for decades translated into foreign assistance and caring for the most vulnerable. And we have learned how closely aligned our organization's core value of unconditional love is with the Emirati understanding of tasāmuh.

We Finns are often stubborn and sometimes slow. But we are also open-minded, steady and trustworthy partners (once the ice melts). The first 50 years of diplomatic relationship have been a formidable beginning, but we can all expect that the level of cooperation, and pace in building tangible partnerships is picking up. My wish for the future of UAE-Finland cooperation is that tolerance, or rather tasāmuh, could have a pronounced role. It is a winning recipe not only for the two nations, but for the whole world.



Education & Health

Education & Health

The UAE and Finland are united by a shared determination to advance education and healthcare – two sectors regarded as essential cornerstones of societal progress.

The UAE and Finland are united by a shared determination to advance education and healthcare – two sectors regarded as essential cornerstones of societal progress. Together, they promote well-being and happiness as well as sustainable awareness, they empower women, instill values of tolerance and cooperation, and prepare new generations to thrive in an increasingly technological world.

The UAE is committed to drawing on global expertise to strengthen its national education system, enhancing both competitiveness and outcomes. Finland stands out as a key partner in this effort, with shared priorities that include fostering innovation, advancing academic collaboration, and adopting modern teaching methods. Fruitful cooperation has been found from nursery level approaches to partnerships between universities and research institutions. A landmark example came in 2010, when the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) signed an agreement with EduCluster Finland, to pilot the Finnish education system model in a number of Abu Dhabi's public schools.

Healthcare has likewise been a long-standing field of collaboration. Notable initiatives include joint efforts in newborn screening and partnerships with the Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority. Both countries share a commitment to ensuring universal access to high-quality and efficient healthcare services - preventive, curative, rehabilitative - at every stage of life. This shared vision has made health a natural and important area for international cooperation and partnership. With women's health identified as a shared priority, the UAE Embassy in Helsinki, in May 2025, sponsored the launch of Finland's Women's Health Hub.


WELCOME
TO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التالي
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أستمع لمعلمتي



The UAE and Finland stand as pioneers in advancing innovative and modern approaches to education. A clear illustration of this commitment is the UAE's recent introduction of a comprehensive AI curriculum across its public schools.

As the UAE continues its rapid transformation into a knowledge-based society, Finland's globally admired educational model remains a source of inspiration. Our collaboration is growing, based on a shared focus on the opportunities technology brings to this sector, and aimed at equipping the next generation with the most relevant knowledge and skills.

H.E. SARAH AL AMIRI,
UAE MINISTER OF EDUCATION


ME.
NO.
PAUSE.



WOMEN'S HEALTH HUB
LAUNCH, MAY 2025

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The relationship between our two countries is excellent, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health looks forward to many opportunities for cooperation in the fields of health and wellbeing. There is significant potential, particularly in areas such as health technology and digitalization - including health AI and data economy collaboration - to enhance the efficiency of our health systems and improve the wellbeing of our populations.

I am confident that the collaboration between our countries across various sectors, especially in health and wellbeing, will continue to be fruitful and successful for the next 50 years and beyond.

H.E. VELI-MIKKO NIEMI,
PERMANENT SECRETARY,
FINLAND'S MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
AFFAIRS AND HEALTH



Sara Ben Ammar

PRINCIPAL, KHALIFA BIN ZAYED AL AWAL SCHOOL

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The UAE and Finland may seem far apart, but what we share is a deep belief in education as a tool for building strong, compassionate societies.

Education Rooted in Identity, Open to the World

As the principal of Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Awal (KBZA) School, I am proud to be part of a national journey where the UAE is shaping its own educational narrative – one that is proudly rooted in our Emirati identity while embracing global perspectives.

In our school, we are not importing systems – we are creating a homegrown, bilingual model that reflects who we are and where we are going. Our curriculum is developed with care, designed by our teams, and infused with our culture, values, and future aspirations.

That said, Finland has inspired us – not as a blueprint, but as a reference. We have studied how Finnish schools build trust, prioritize well-being, and promote learner agency. These ideas sparked conversations in our own context. How do we ensure every Emirati child learns in a way that is purposeful and human-centered? How can innovation sit alongside tradition, not in place of it?

The UAE and Finland may seem far apart, but what we share is a deep belief in education as a tool for building strong, compassionate societies. My hope is that the next 50 years of this relationship will continue to reflect that – not in replication, but in co-creation.

Katia Al Kaisi

FOUNDER AND CEO, EDUCATION HOUSE FINLAND

In my view, the UAE's leap in AI, particularly its efforts to develop Arabic-language large language models, holds great promise for the wider region.

For almost 21 years, I have called the UAE my home. I first came to Dubai as a Nokia employee and spent my first decade working mostly with larger Finnish companies. In 2016, inspired by the UAE's entrepreneurial spirit, I founded my own company, Education House Finland. I am proud of the contributions my company has made so far to the UAE's remarkable progress in education and skills training.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of working closely with the visionaries driving the UAE's story of progress, as well as with those dedicated to turning that vision into reality for the betterment of their nation. The results are striking. UAE schools have rapidly risen in international rankings, with some even surpassing Finnish schools. The country has also built a solid strategy and track record in continuous professional development and skills training. Most recently, as one of the first countries worldwide, it has rolled out an AI curriculum from Kindergarten through Grade 12.

What continues to fascinate me is the UAE's ability to take such developmental leaps while simultaneously stimulating a positive context rooted in diversity, tolerance, and inclusivity. Societal relations are built on trust, respect, and expertise. This spirit also shapes the way my relationships with clients have grown. More than anything, it has been these people-to-people interactions that have deepened my understanding and appreciation of the UAE - far beyond its iconic skyline and impressive infrastructure.

Over time, my company - and perhaps I myself - have evolved in step with the UAE's vision. I am inspired every day by the future-oriented, can-do attitude and positive outlook that define this country. In many areas, the UAE has become a regional pioneer, especially in integrating AI and other technological solutions across sectors. In my view, the UAE's leap in AI, particularly its efforts to develop Arabic-language large language models, holds great promise for the wider region. I am excited to be part of this continuing journey.





Markku Pelkonen

CHIEF LEARNING OFFICER,
EDUCATION HOUSE FINLAND

> *At the heart of the synergy between Finland and the UAE I see our shared belief in continuous learning and well-being - as a value, a practice, and a bridge to the future.*

Being part of the Friends of the UAE Circle is deeply meaningful to me, as it aligns with something I have long held as my life's purpose: enabling learners of all ages to develop essential, future-ready life skills.

Coming from Finland, where educational transformation often happens quietly and over time, I have found that the UAE's bold vision and energy has also inspired my own path forward. Collaboration with local educational institutions has opened up new ways of thinking and growing – not just professionally, but also on a deeply personal level. In many ways, I felt part of the UAE community even before this circle was officially launched.

One of the most meaningful moments for me was being invited to speak with young people in Sharjah about life skills, around topics such as purpose, resilience and adaptability and most importantly, what it takes to grow and develop in the future. After a series of workshops at Rubu'Qarn, I had the privilege of sitting down with future local talent and engaging in forward-looking conversations about our shared dreams. What made this moment especially powerful was that my youngest son was with me, participating in the training and coaching sessions. That evening, as we looked up at the sky, I told him: "This is what the future of learning looks like." That moment has stayed with me ever since.

Another memory I return to often is from a hike in the mountains following an event with the Sharjah Private Education Authority. We walked the Al Rabi Hiking Trail, surrounded by breathtaking views and space for quiet reflection.

At the heart of the synergy between Finland and the UAE I see our shared belief in continuous learning and well-being - as a value, a practice, and a bridge to the future. Whether through AI, educational innovation, or purposeful leadership, both countries are shaping systems that seek to combine human intelligence with the ethical, meaningful use of technology. It is all about improving society and engaging in continuous learning for sustainable growth.

Looking forward, my personal dream is to work even more closely - and directly on-site - with teams in the UAE. My hope for the next 50 years is that our countries continue to move forward as co-learners, co-creators, and co-dreamers – shaping a brighter future through courageous growth and learning.

EduCluster Finland in the UAE

> *Looking forward, our wish for the next 50 years of UAE-Finland relations is simple: that we continue to learn from each other.*

EduCluster Finland's story in international education cannot be told without mentioning the UAE. Entering the UAE market in 2010 was one of our first steps in exporting Finnish educational expertise – and it became a turning point in establishing our company.

Between 2010 and 2017, we partnered with Abu Dhabi to introduce Finnish teaching methods in two primary schools, applying the ADEK curriculum with innovative Finnish teachers and tools. This initiative demonstrated our approach: adapting proven educational practices to local contexts, fostering well-rounded and creative students, and creating a model that could expand to more schools. It exemplifies how our early collaboration with the UAE shaped our understanding of international education and inspired reflection, innovation, and shared growth. The collaboration taught us how to translate Finnish pedagogy into new cultural and educational contexts. We learned how to listen, adapt, and co-create. The UAE challenged us to think bigger, move faster, and refine our services, which helped us grow into the global education partner we are today.

One defining moment came during a large-scale teacher training initiative, when participants reflected not only on Finnish practices but also on their own teaching. There is a specific memory that has stayed with us from a teacher training session in Abu Dhabi. A participant once said: "I came expecting to learn about Finland, but instead I have learned more about my own way of teaching." That comment captured exactly what we hoped to achieve. This realization - that Finnish education is not about copying, but about inspiring reflection and improvement - has stayed at the core of how we work with all our partners worldwide.

The UAE has consistently surprised us with its vision and commitment to education as a foundation for the future. At the same time, we have discovered synergies with Finland: shared respect for teachers, a strong belief in the transformative power of education, and the ambition to prepare young people for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

Looking forward, our wish for the next 50 years of UAE–Finland relations is simple: that we continue to learn from each other. The UAE's ambition and Finland's educational expertise are a powerful combination - together, they can inspire generations of learners and educators well beyond our two countries.



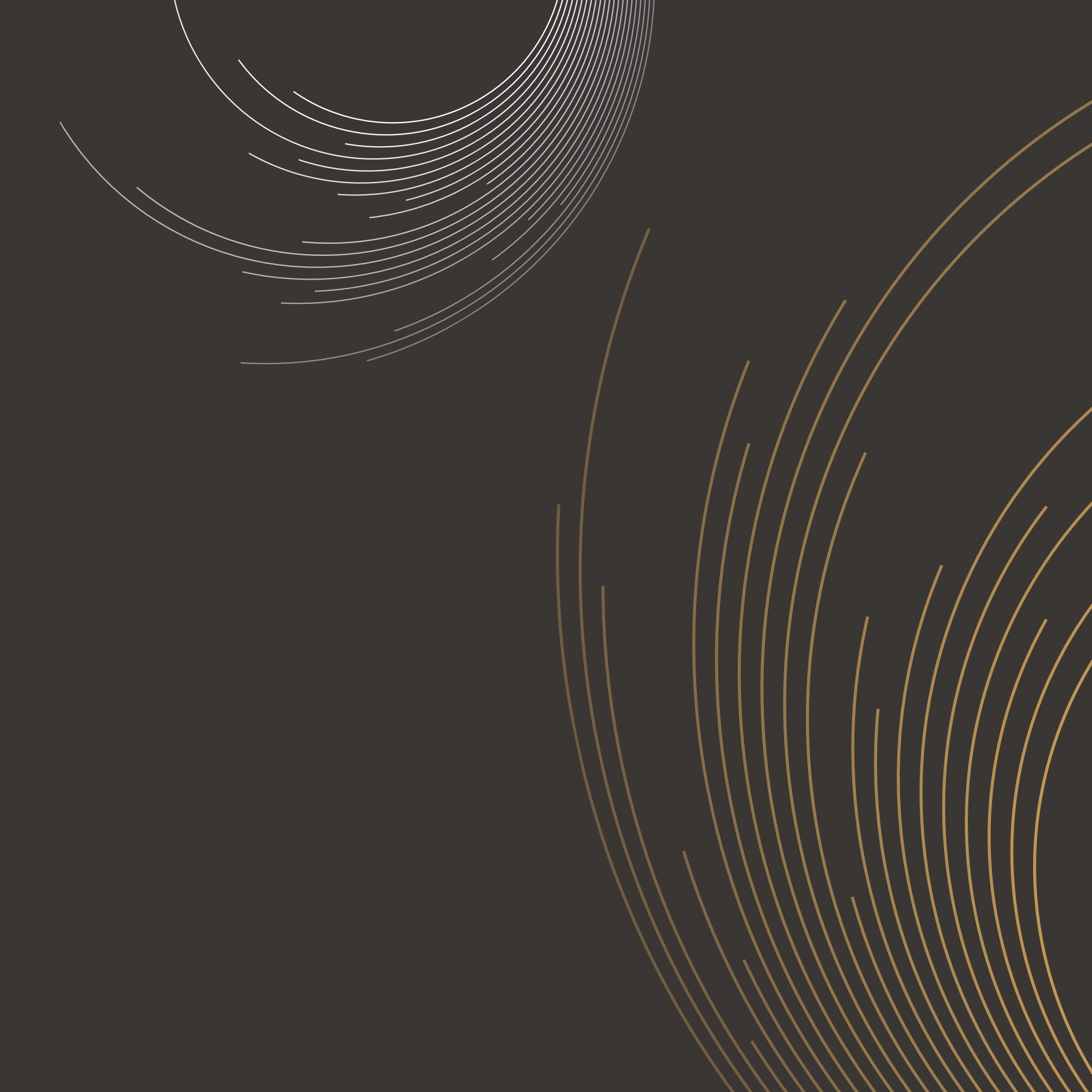

Pedagogy
Helsinki
Helsinki


Thursday
23rd
February



#MemoirsOfAmbassador

Education has this flywheel function for supporting, stimulating, and inspiring innovative thinking and practices, in which proactivity and flexibility are core. And as a result, education itself needs to adapt and adjust.



Renewable Energy & Sustainability

Renewable Energy & Sustainability

Finland and the UAE are also closely cooperating in the preparations for the UN Water Conference 2026, which is co-hosted by the UAE and will take place in Abu Dhabi.

Sustainability and renewable energy have become central themes in UAE–Finland bilateral relations. The transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy represents a shared challenge and priority. The UAE has taken decisive action to diversify the UAE energy mix and economy. Today, the non-oil sector accounts for about 70 percent of the UAE's total economic activity. The share of additional energy sources is rapidly expanding to meet growing energy demands. The UAE also has a deep commitment to sustainability, demonstrated through its National Net Zero By 2050 Pathway, various renewable energy initiatives like the world's largest solar projects, and adherence to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In May 2022, the UAE and Finland signed an MoU in the field of energy, with a focus on the clean energy transition, hydrogen technologies, oil and gas nuclear waste management, geology and mineral resources. Subsequent initiatives have focused on advancing sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) technologies, reducing emissions in aviation and shipping, and exploring broader sustainability measures.

A clear highlight was the bilateral cooperation in the context of the 28th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28), which was held in the UAE in 2023. Finland had its own country pavilion for the first time, underscoring the shared priorities of the two nations and reinforcing our dedication to building a more sustainable world for future generations. Finland and the UAE are also closely cooperating in the preparations for the UN Water Conference 2026, which is co-hosted by the UAE and will take place in Abu Dhabi.

People in the UAE and Finland have maintained a close connection to their natural heritage, preserving unique habitats and cherishing biodiversity. In August 2025, an MoU was signed to deepen cooperation in meteorology and polar research, aiming to enhance understanding of climate change and support the development of innovative solutions to global environmental challenges.



There is an urgent need to increase adaptation finance, strengthen water security, develop innovative climate finance solutions, and ensure a just transition to a low-carbon economy.

The UAE recognizes that these goals can only be achieved through enhanced international cooperation.

In this effort, Finland has consistently been a trusted and constructive partner, as demonstrated during COP28 in Dubai and in the ongoing preparations for the 2026 UN Water Conference which will take place in Abu Dhabi.

H.E. ABDULLA BALALAA,
UAE ASSISTANT MINISTER OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS FOR ENERGY AND
SUSTAINABILITY





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The 2023 World Circular Economy Forum in Finland was an essential platform to discuss the game-changing dynamics of sustainability and the circular economy. The forum’s spirit resonated strongly with our shared mission: supporting ambitious startups to shape a better, more sustainable future for generations to come.

Throughout my week-long visit, which coincided with the UAE’s ‘Year of Sustainability’, I had the opportunity to meet with many Finnish policymakers, business representatives, and academics. Across our discussions, one message was clear: the transition to a circular economy demands us to be brave, and it requires us to empower our youth to be part of this change.

H.H. SHEIKHA SHAMMA BINT SULTAN BIN KHALIFA AL NAHYAN
PRESIDENT & CEO
FRONTIER25
(PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS UAE INDEPENDENT CLIMATE CHANGE ACCELERATORS - UICCA)

Dr. Mari Luomi

PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER
CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY



Almost two decades ago, for me as a young social scientist, the Gulf was a distant region full of contrasts. I had developed two seemingly irreconcilable research interests, the hydrocarbon-rich Gulf region's politics, and global climate change policy. Then, something unexpected happened. Abu Dhabi had announced it would build the world's most sustainable city and invest both in renewable and nuclear energy. Soon after, the country won a whirlwind campaign to become the host to the International Renewable Energy Agency. The UAE had decided it would become a regional leader in this space that back in the day had few competitors.

In my doctoral thesis I documented how oil wealth and an ambitious climate change policy could be combined, perhaps against all odds. The UAE's pioneering role in climate change policy in the region would



build on longstanding institutional and historical legacies. It would be enabled by hydrocarbon wealth but also related limitations. It would be guided by farsighted leadership, navigating a complex region, energized by a young population and global aspirations.

Years later, in 2015, I moved to Abu Dhabi to contribute to setting up the Emirates Diplomatic Academy (now Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy). This led to an even more nuanced understanding of the contrasts, as I observed how combining the clean energy and hydrocarbon agendas were converted into a source of identity and a lighthouse for a region with a seemingly difficult relationship with the world's aims to shift away from fossil fuels.

The same year, the then Crown Prince H.H. Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan announced that in 50 years' time the UAE would celebrate the last barrel of oil. This seemingly contradictory statement embodied for me what the UAE in essence is about: innovating, surprising, and setting aspirations that at first might seem impossible.

A long road to celebrating the last barrel and net-zero emissions remains ahead, but much has already been accomplished. Many regional firsts have been set. These have included ambitious clean energy targets and installations, and even more ambitious emission reduction targets. They have also included the largest UN climate summit in history, which concluded with a call to transition away from fossil fuels and triple renewable energy capacity globally.

Now, after more than 20 years of research in this region, I am still driven by the same two research interests. But the contrasts, while still there, seem increasingly reconcilable.

Jarmo Suominen

CEO, REJLERS ABU DHABI



Our journey in the UAE began in June 2010, when the board of directors of Neste Jacobs Oy approved the initiative I presented, as CEO of Neste Jacobs Oy, to establish a business presence and open an office in Abu Dhabi. Neste Jacobs was a joint venture between Finnish Neste Oil Oyj and American Jacobs Inc., providing high-quality engineering and project management services to the Energy and Petrochemicals industry.

Initially, we opened a representative office sponsored by the Supreme Petroleum Council, and in 2011, we established a branch office and began business relationships with ADNOC Refining (Takreer) and Borouge (a joint venture between ADNOC and Borealis). The beginning was somewhat slow, but through numerous meetings and many tea sessions in executive offices, we eventually secured our first assignments from Takreer and signed a framework agreement with Borouge.

I still recall valuable advice from our Emirati counterparts. The COO of Takreer once told me to "connect the position with the name, and then with the face," emphasizing the importance of building relationships with the right people.

In 2019, Neste Jacobs – Abu Dhabi merged with Rejlers Group, becoming Rejlers International Engineering Services – Abu Dhabi. Despite challenges during the pandemic, we have grown rapidly and



established ourselves as one of the leading engineering and project management service providers in Abu Dhabi. Today, we serve a diverse range of clients across the region and have grown into a powerhouse of over 300 engineers – and growing.

The pace of development in the UAE during our tenure has truly been remarkable, and the country has become home to many of us. The UAE's tolerance and openness towards the international community set an example for many nations worldwide.

Finland and the UAE share more similarities than one might initially think. Both are relatively small countries with a strong commitment to peace and collaboration rather than judgment. We have extreme weather conditions - one country being hot and another one cold. Both countries share a passion for technological development, innovation and education.

Looking ahead to the next 50 years, we envision the relationship between our two countries continuing to flourish, offering mutual business and cultural opportunities. We aim to build a bridge between Finland and the UAE through business. Our commitment to the success of the UAE is demonstrated by our continuously improving In-Country Value (ICV) score, which is now among the highest in our industry.


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SCUBAPRO

Petteri Terho

CEO AND CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD,
NUUKA SOLUTIONS OY

The Best Unknown UAE

For over ten years, I was proud and happy to call the UAE my home. Most visitors remember the UAE for its breathtaking skyscrapers, iconic Palm Islands, and glittering cityscapes. Yet, for me, the most extraordinary part of the country was not found on the land, but beneath the surface of the sea.

Many of my weekends began before sunrise, with a motorcycle ride from the Palm Jumeirah across the desert and Hajar Mountains towards Fujairah. The winding road through Sharjah's sands and the rugged eastern ranges was a joy in itself, but the true reward came with the arrival in small villages near Dibbā Rock, Al Aqah, and Khor Fakkan. By then, the sun blazed across a cloudless sky, and the Indian Ocean shimmered with an irresistible promise.

To most of us, the very idea of breathing underwater feels unnatural. Yet once you overcome that instinct, you discover another world – one as silent and timeless as the desert itself. Beneath the calm waves lie colorful coral reefs, schools of dazzling fish, graceful turtles, and even the occasional reef shark. The water is strikingly clear and vibrant, a living counterbalance to the hurried pace of urban life only two hours away.

The UAE has taken notable steps to protect this hidden treasure. Artificial reefs created from sunken ships now foster marine biodiversity, while 16 Marine Protected Areas - covering nearly 14 percent of the nation's waters - safeguard fragile habitats. These, and many other similar efforts and undertakings ensure that future generations, too, can experience the serenity and richness of the underwater world.

In this sense, the UAE's hidden ocean shares something deeply familiar with Finland. Both nations are defined not only by what is built above ground, but also by the purity and vitality of their natural environments. Finland is known for its crystal-clear lakes, forests, and clean air; the UAE, though often seen through the lens of desert and skyscrapers, holds equally pristine beauty under the waves. In both places, nature offers balance, perspective, and a reminder of our responsibility to preserve it.

So, if you ever find yourself in the Emirates and want to escape the hectic city life, I urge you to look beyond the skyline. Venture east, dive below the surface, and discover the best unknown UAE – the world beneath the sea, where silence, color, and life flourish in harmony.







#MemoirsOfAmbassador

To Emiratis and Finns, nature is more than just a landscape – it is a symbol of stability, coexistence and harmony.

Jaana Tapanainen-Thiess

ADVISOR, MINISTRY OF CABINET AFFAIRS AND THE FUTURE, PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

> *My experience in the UAE was a powerful reminder of how vision and action, imagination and determination shape the future for the generations to come.*

Finland and the UAE share a deep passion for the future – a passion I too share. I have had the privilege of working in the Prime Minister's Offices (PMO) of both countries, applying the craft of strategic foresight to build anticipatory governance and amplify future readiness at the national level.

The UAE Centennial 2071 was launched in 2017 and I had the opportunity to contribute to this vision, looking at the future of society, education, health, the economy, the government, geopolitics, and the environment. I was impressed how boldly the UAE envisioned its preferred future and set clear goals in achieving it. The UAE's aspiration to shape the future was evident also in many other projects I had the honor to work on. The scenario came alive as a film, unveiled during the first annual Government Days in September 2017, with participation from federal and local government entities. Children were invited to draw their visions of the UAE.

Both Finland and the UAE are shaped by a strong legacy of values. In 2017, Finland celebrated its Centennial, strengthening the sense of belonging and deepening the meaning of independence. In the UAE it was the Year of Giving, and I witnessed a nation embracing a culture of social responsibility, volunteerism, and service to others, followed by the Year of Zayed, centenary birth anniversary of the Founding Father of the UAE, and then the Year of Tolerance.

The World Government Summit preparations impressed me year after year - the energy in the office felt like working in a start-up. In 2018, now-President Alexander Stubb delivered his remarks at the Summit in Dubai, talking about Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Scandinavian Happiness. Soon after, Finland was ranked the happiest country in the world - a title it has held for eight consecutive years. The UAE has been a trailblazer in promoting happiness and wellbeing under the leadership of H.E. Ohood Al Roumi, now Minister of State for Government Development and the Future. I met many remarkable women in leadership positions across government, all deeply committed to shaping the future of the UAE. On International Women's Day, all women in the office were celebrated – something I had never experienced before.

My experience in the UAE was a powerful reminder of how vision and action, imagination and determination shape the future for the generations to come. For the next 50 years – and beyond!






53
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Marina Congress
Helsinki



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Guided by the vision of the Founding Father Sheikh Zayed and the wisdom of the UAE's leadership, we proudly celebrate the spirit of union, the strength of our connectedness, and the achievements of today's pioneers and tomorrow's dreamers.
We look to the future with confidence and optimism, under the leadership of UAE President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Together, we forge ahead into an exciting future and invite you to join us on this journey of continued success.

Acknowledgments

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