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Matti Vanhanen, Prime Minister of Finland
Inauguration of Ponsse's new component factory in Vieremä

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to warmly thank you for the opportunity to participate in the inauguration of this component factory here in Vieremä. Built together with the municipality of Vieremä, the component factory that is now being inaugurated is yet another giant step forwards in the history of the company.

Not even prime ministers get to inaugurate factories every week. Production investments are sorely needed here in Finland. It is safe to say that the corporate history of North Savo is once again being made here in Vieremä. Erecting a new component factory is a good indication of the growth of the company and of sound confidence in the future.

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Many of us here know the history of Ponsse well. Einari Vidgrén founded the Ponsse Forest Machine Factory in 1970. Few success stories, corporate or otherwise, grow out of easy circumstances and the same can be said for Ponsse, too. It is no wonder that this success story was born here in North Savo, Vieremä. By leafing through the history of Ponsse, one can try to capture the atmosphere prevailing in North Savo in the 1960s and 70s when the company was launched. In the past, when a son was born to a smallholder's family in North Savo, it was said that a logger had been born.

Up until the 1960s, traditional logging was a significant source of employment in the countryside. It was hard work, completely different from what we understand work to be today. There were haulers and fellers. Haulers brought their own horses and wooden sledges to logging sites to haul timber. In addition, the sites had markers, graders, men to freeze the tracks for the sledges, stamper, a site foreman and a cook.

You, Einari, are one of these loggers. Your life story is unique and I would not be surprised if someone turned it into a movie. You represent hardworking and inventive Finnish entrepreneurs who do not buckle under pressure. Ideas arise out of practical necessities. When a machine you bought kept breaking down, you started to develop a new and improved version.

But at the same time, you are an executive who takes good care of his staff and who bears his social responsibility in an exemplary fashion. You lead your troops by your own example. The Ponsse spirit is one of the core values of your company. It is something that you always sense when visiting here and without a doubt, it is one of the key elements of this success story. Einari, you have often been heard saying: "Tämä palakinto kuuluu kaekille ponsselaisille, sehän on ollu ja on yhäkii tiimityötä. Yks immeenen ee siihen pysty." (This award belongs to everyone here at Ponsse. It always has been and always will be teamwork. No one can do it alone.)

On this occasion of inaugurating this factory, I would like to thank you, Einari, for all the hard work that you have done for this area and region.

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Ponsse's history also illustrates the symbiotic relationship Finns have with nature. One of the cornerstones of the development of Ponsse's technology has been how to tread lightly and nimbly in nature without damaging it. According to its corporate history, Ponsse became known to its competitors, customers and other logging industry professionals in 1983 in a single dramatic development when the legendary Ponsse S15 forwarder was launched on the

market. Built partly from aluminium, the machine's chassis made it significantly lighter than its competitors' chassis, putting it in a class of its own when it came to cross-terrain performance; the tyre tracks of this lightweight vehicle were less noticeable than those of its competitors.

The idea that timber harvesting could be carried out with minimum impact on the environment was of great importance to the entire Finnish forestry industry. Let us pause for a moment to think how things would be if this was not so. It would substantially lessen our opportunities to make use of the forests and extract resources to maintain our welfare. Thanks to the technology developed by Ponsse, it is possible to harvest all parts of trees more efficiently, for example for use as a source of bioenergy.

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Dear friends,

In recent years, there has been a lot of talk about the benefits of business competence and customer orientation. Special concern has been voiced as to whether enough attention has been paid to incorporating entrepreneurship, business competence development and customer orientation in education. And rightly so, as these issues can hardly be over-emphasized. But you do not need to go to the ends of the earth for something that is readily available at hand. In today's global business environment, the core values of Finnish business — expertise, straightforwardness, honesty and openness — seem to be highly valued. For customers around the world, quality is the key issue and quality is something we are good at. More and more often, you hear stories about how the straightforward approach Finns take has been a key reason in winning a new customer or an order. So it seems that this is enough of a formula for success out in the world and something we should continue to nurture and cherish. Ponsse is a prime example of Finnish expertise in which practical technical knowledge is combined with reliability and efficient customer service.

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Dear friends,

Even though more will be required of us in the future due to intensifying international competition and the ageing of our population, I do not doubt for a second that we can overcome the challenges the future has in store for us. And my visit today here to North Savo has only reinforced that conviction. Despite the harsh natural conditions and long distances, we will be able to find our place in this changing world.

And it should be remembered that a relatively small slice of the growing markets is enough for our small country to succeed and for us to be able to take care of the welfare of our fellow citizens and ensure equality across Finland. We must go forth to find the growing markets, both here and afar. It is important that we focus on what we know how to do.

There is no such thing as a permanent victory on the world market. We were unpleasantly reminded of this today when Perlos announced that it would be shutting down production in Finland. The news ripped through your neighbouring region of North Karelia. The government has already launched close cooperation with Perlos and the region to create new jobs for this professionally skilled workforce.

One of the most important objectives for the upcoming electoral period is to ensure Finnish ownership. As Ponsse has shown, when the owners are not faceless entities, the company's commitment to Finland increases. Companies are part of their local and regional communities. We must see to it that there will be enough companies and owners with a face in the future, as well.

It is also beneficial to employees that the owner of the company they work for is close by. Finnish owners naturally have better resources to see beyond temporary problems and the capacity to identify competitive advantages in Finland in cases where a foreign owner would have already grown impatient.

Now is not the time for confrontation; it is the time for cooperation. We remember well what confrontation is like from the industrial action that hit the Finnish paper industry slightly more

than one year ago. Such conflicts leave brutal marks on both the industry and the Finnish economy that will take a long time to heal.

The spirit of cooperation must be further developed nationwide, in the unions and at workplaces. This will enable us to secure employment and means of livelihood in Finland. I do not believe that we would be inaugurating this factory here in Vieremä today without the Ponsse spirit, without the close cooperation that goes on here between the company and its employees.

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I hereby declare Ponsse's new component factory open.