



PERMANENT MISSION OF FINLAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Advancement of Women

STATEMENT BY

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Mr Chair,

Women form half of the population of this globe. It is clear that political decisions and implementation of joint commitments require the equal participation of women and equal participation are a prerequisite to achieving international peace and security, development, fulfillment of human rights and other important goals.

It is essential to approach the challenges of democratic governance and equality with an understanding that women and men are equal but they have different needs. Democratic governance means that women and men from all social classes and ethnic backgrounds participate in political, social and economic decision making. We welcome the expanded political mobilization that has taken place during the so-called Arab Spring. Women of different political, religious and social backgrounds have come out to the streets and squares. Women have demanded the same rights that men have: work, food, education, justice, dignity, participation in political decision making, a better future for their children.

Key components of women's participation are fair and equitable conditions for education and work combined with the chance to lead a life of security and opportunity. All countries need to do better in this respect. It is well understood to use quality in education as a main measure for achieving work. To promote gender equality and to empower women, the progress made over the past decade, school enrollment for girls in primary school is much lower than that for boys in many parts of the world and is the lowest amongst the most vulnerable groups.

The World Economic Forum has identified Finland to be among the most competitive economies in the world. One of the factors affecting this is the gender equality that allows women and men and men to take effectively part in the economy. Women's economic empowerment is crucial for development. Women's full participation in economic life is essential in achieving gender equality based development. The gender equality of Finland is a global context. As the World Bank World Development Report 2012 Gender Equality and Economic Efficiency and Development Outcomes as well as make institutions more representative. In short, women's empowerment and equal participation means better life for everyone.

It is very regrettable that we still do not have enough progress on MDG5, to improve maternal health. Too many women die of causes that would be easy to prevent. Urgent attention of the situation of women and girls in society. UNFPA and WHO argue that if we ensure access to modern contraceptives we can prevent between 20 and 40 % of all maternal deaths. Recognizing sexual and reproductive health and rights as human rights is a central element in promoting gender equality. Finland promotes sexual and reproductive health and rights both in bilateral and multilateral cooperation and aims to strengthen the operational capability of organizations working for them.

Women's perspectives also need to be represented at all high-level international debates:

Studies show that women play an instrumental role in safeguarding scarce natural resources, thus women have a crucial role in promoting socially, economically and ecologically sustainable development. Women's potential must be fully utilized in the Rio+20 process, and their participation must be strengthened.

We also stress the importance of women's full and effective participation in conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping and reconstruction. One important lesson is that women's participation is essential for peace and security. At the international level, Finland has supported the Vienna Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and has agreed on cooperation with the Government of Nepal to support the implementation of the Plan.

Women are key actors working for human rights. Violence against women is an alarming global problem and a serious obstacle in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Women face violence in all cultures and classes, regardless of age, social status, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or class. This happens in many forms: women experience violence in intimate relationships, in the private and public spheres. All too often violence or its threat is also directed against women human rights defenders and those who work against violence against women; they deserve special support and attention.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women stress that States have an obligation to prevent and eliminate violence against women. Finland has been an active member for a comprehensive regional arrangement, and it was among the first countries to sign the Council of Europe's European Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in May this year.

We have witnessed the creation of the UN Women, the UN entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The vision of the UN Women's Executive Director, Michelle Bachelet, and the UN Women's strategy plan focus on important areas such as ending violence against women, women, peace and security and women's economic empowerment. We will continue to support and fully support UN Women's work.

Mr Chair,

Women's full participation in society, economy, and governance as well as providing women with equal opportunities that, unfortunately, is still not an everyday reality. Successfully attaining these goals entails hard work. Finland will continue to work in cooperation with all partners to make these human rights a reality for everyone, regardless of ethnicity, sex or age.

Thank you.