



Permanent Mission of Finland
to the United Nations

National Statement of Finland

High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

General Debate

Delivered by:

H.E. Ms. Li Andersson

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Excellencies, dear participants,

I am truly honoured to speak here today. The High-level Political Forum is the main United Nations platform on sustainable development and it has a central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level.

The UN Secretary General's Report on Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals paints a grim picture of the advancement towards our common goals. We are meeting at a very critical juncture. We are halfway through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and sliding backwards in several SDGs. The COVID-19 pandemic and breaches of peace have made it increasingly difficult to achieve the SDGs by 2030, but we must push forward.

The pandemic has brought numerous hardships, and often those in the most vulnerable situations are hardest hit. The central promise of the 2030 Agenda is: "to reach first those who are furthest away". This is hugely important and the only way for a globally successful implementation of the Agenda.

Finland is strongly committed to equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines, to save lives and to enhance education, health and well-being all over the world.

Peace and security are a prerequisite for sustainable development. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

Finland, like the EU and all its Member States, unreservedly condemn Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, which blatantly violates international law and human rights as well as the UN Charter. This war waged by Russia in Ukraine threaten both the achievement of the SDG's and the global economic recovery from the pandemic. We strongly support UN Secretary General's call on Russia to stop the war.

Furthermore, we are deeply concerned about the Russian military aggressions impacts on food security in Ukraine and globally. Russia has blamed sanctions for the increase of global food prices, but food and fertilizers are exempted from sanctions. Therefore, it is clear that the Russian aggression has significantly contributed to the current food crisis.

EU and its Member States have a significant role in advancing sustainable development globally. Via the Team Europe approach, the EU is showing leadership in accelerating the implementation of the SDG:s by bringing together both public and private sector, which is a prerequisite for successful implementation of the SDGs.

I want to emphasize three issues that are relevant for our successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda:

- First, we must increase investments in education, training and continuous learning, since human capital is the key for a sustainable future. We look forward to the Transforming Education Summit, which must become the turning point in efforts to combat the global education crises. We must urgently scale up efforts to improve quality, inclusion and relevance of education, which is not only a fundamental human right, but also pivotal for democracy, equity and climate action. Investing in teachers and ensuring their decent working conditions and support in work will be the key. The pandemic has also meant that almost 370 million children and youth were deprived daily meal at school, due to the school closures. As the co-chair of the global Schools Meals Coalition,

Finland calls for improved nutrition through organised daily school meal to all pupils and students globally.

-Second, innovation. We see innovation as essential for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals. I can mention as a concrete example Finland's Strategy for Africa by which we are intensifying cooperation between African and Finnish partners in research and innovation.

-Third, gender equality. We cannot achieve the SDGs without addressing gender inequalities. Not only do we need additional efforts to ensure that every woman and girl is free from any form of discrimination, violence and harmful practice; that their sexual and reproductive health and rights are fulfilled; and that women can fully and effectively participate in political and economic life. We must also better ensure work towards gender equality in all other SDG goals and targets.

To finish, allow me to make three reflections regarding Finland's work on the 2030 Agenda.

-First, the aim of my Government is to transform Finland into a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society by 2030. One of the specific targets in the Government Programme is to make Finland climate neutral by 2035. To that end, the National Parliament adopted a new Climate Act just few weeks ago.

-Second, my Government continues Finland's long tradition of engaging the whole of society in sustainability work. The National Commission on Sustainable Development facilitates the participation of the whole of society. It is a multi-stakeholder forum that has operated since 1993 under the Prime Minister's leadership.

-Third, the new strategy of the National Commission calls for a more systemic approach to our sustainability work. It calls the Finnish society to focus on six critical areas of transformation, which will lead us to a more sustainable Finland, and to a more sustainable world as a whole.

According to the Sustainable Development Solutions Network's report this year, Finland ranks number one in the 2030 Agenda implementation for the second year in a row. We are proud of this achievement, since it results from decades of consistent work. This also makes us humble, since we realize that there is still much work to do to reach the goals in for example climate action and biodiversity, as well as in changing consumption and production patterns.

To conclude, I wish to underline that all countries need to speed up their work on the 2030 Agenda, and Finland is no exception.

Finland wants to be in the forefront of this work. It is our responsibility for future generations to act now!

Thank you!