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**STATEMENT**

**by**

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Minister for Foreign Trade and Development of Finland**

**at the fifteenth session  
of the Commission on Sustainable Development**

**TURNING COMMITMENTS INTO ACTION – WORKING TOGETHER IN  
PARTNERSHIP**

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to associate myself with the statement of Germany on behalf of the European Union.

From the Finnish point of view I would like to mention a few areas where we have been especially active.

First, the Marrakech process on promoting best practices and government policies on sustainable buildings and construction. We see here a huge potential for savings: 40 per cent (%) of all energy is consumed in buildings and industrial construction processes.

Secondly, Energy and Environment partnership (EEP) with Central America, which Finland initiated and which promotes the use on renewable energy resources in eight countries.

Thirdly, energy efficiency and conservation of energy. In this area we must take concrete steps including energy audits, especially in cases where cost-effective investments are possible. The Energy Audit Conference hosted by Finland last September launched discussions on a global energy audit program. We will continue pursuing this idea further together with our partners.

Mr. Chairman

When preparing myself for this important discussion I read my speech at the Rio Conference on Environment and Development fifteen years ago. I was then as Foreign Minister leading the Finnish delegation.

One of my greatest concerns was implementation and follow-up. It was our idea to give sustainable development a leading role when reforming the United Nations. I said:

"We should set our ambitions high enough when reforming the economic and social sectors. The United Nations should have a leading role in the action leading mankind to sustainable development. Now, we are just taking the first steps on this path."

One of the first steps was the creation of the Commission on Sustainable Development. It has done excellent work on many important sectors, but I am asking myself whether it has been able to address sustainable development in a holistic way that it deserves.

Let me take an example of areas where the CSD has been less active.

There are two inter-related key issues, which we should be able to address when promoting sustainable development: rural development and the growth of mega cities.

In a sustainable economy we should rely mainly on the renewable resources. All over the world, also in rural areas, we have to have people for the sustainable maintenance and utilisation of these resources. All materials, also nutritives, should be effectively recycled. This is possible if the towns and cities have a reasonable size and if they are surrounded by rural areas.

Mega cities all over the world are more or less unsustainable. Their food, water energy supply come from long distances and their waste problems are enormous. Life in mega city slums is totally inhuman.

These two elements of global development are inter-linked: lack of rural development leads to ever stronger migration to mega cities.

So, in order to promote sustainable development we should have effective rural policies and we should encourage all nations to favour the growth of smaller towns and cities. These rural and regional policies would promote all main goals of ecologically sustainable development and give people, especially the poorest people, much better living conditions than the uncontrolled and unhealthy growth of the mega cities.

I am aware of the fact that the CSD is going to concentrate on agriculture during the next two years. In my opinion this must be done in a wider context of rural and regional development.

Mr. Chairman

Finally I would like to come back to the institutional aspects of sustainable development. As I said, I am satisfied with our work in the Commission on Sustainable Development, but I think that we should have a more holistic view on sustainable development and we should have a stronger position in the UN system. We should discuss together how to make this possible.

But first we have to agree on the issues on the agenda of this session. My delegation is ready to work hard in order to reach a consensus agreeable to all.

Thank you Mr. Chairman