

**Keynote address by President of the Republic of Finland Tarja Halonen
at the high-level segment of the UN Economic and Social Council on 30 June 2005**

Mr President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to be here. This meeting is an important part of the process intended to estimate how the principles approved and the promises given at the Millennium Summit and other UN conferences and summits in the 1990s and the 2000s have come true. This meeting is fundamental to the preparations for the Major Event in September.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan based his report 'In Larger Freedom' on a broad concept of security – that is the interrelation between development, security and human rights. This approach and comprehensive policies aiming at a virtuous circle of positive development, emphasise increasingly the role of the ECOSOC and its responsibility in building the future. The Economic and Social Council must measure up to its role and assume its responsibility. The ongoing process is an opportunity that must not be missed.

I am pleased to note that a lot of progress has been made in attaining the goals and objectives that have been jointly agreed at UN conferences and summits. However, there is still much work to be done concerning many issues that are important to development. Demographic threats, infectious diseases and epidemics call for a much more decisive approach. The recent special UN session on HIV/AIDS was fairly outspoken about this.

Women are the majority in the world, not the minority. We cannot afford to ignore this resource. There is much to be done in implementing the recommendations of the Final Act of the Beijing conference. Women's rights, prevention of violence against women and promoting gender equality are of vital importance in promoting human rights and development. Poverty so often wears the face of a woman. If the status of women is not improved, we cannot make

progress in eradicating poverty either. Mainstreaming equality issues in all action — including the work of the UN — remains a timely and urgent goal.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The promoting of development, security and human rights strengthens the potential for more equitable and more sustainable globalization, and it works both ways. With more efficient management of globalization and with more just rules, we can make globalization a way of achieving the UN's millennium objectives.

We can and we must reform globalization. This was the fundamental notion behind the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, which was set up by the ILO. I had the honour of co-chairing the World Commission with the President of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa.

The concept of social dimension has now become accepted worldwide. Last December, on the basis of a joint Finnish/Tanzanian initiative, the UN General Assembly unanimously approved a resolution whereby the report of the World Commission "*A Fair Globalization: Creating Opportunities for All*" was approved as one of the basic documents for the preparation of the UN summit next September. Of course, the ILO and many other UN agencies and regional organizations have taken up the recommendations of the report. The recommendations of our Commission have been adopted as part of the globalization work of the African Union. The European Union has stressed the importance of the social dimension of globalization – most recently in the conclusions of the June European Council meeting. I believe that our report is part of a process in which globalization will be made fair and will create opportunities for all. I hope that the report of the World Commission will provide concrete content for the outcome of the UN summit in September.

The efficient implementation of the development goals of the Millennium Declaration will help the developing countries to join the process of globalization. The nation-state still remains the most important actor in globalization. Alongside national action and national responsibility, efficient multilateralism and jointly agreed rules are vital to efforts to minimize the disadvantages of globalization. Corporate social responsibility in globalization should also be highlighted more clearly.

The aims of international intergovernmental institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector have drawn closer to each other. Our shared goal is to eradicate poverty and to alleviate economic inequality. There is still much to improve in the methods of cooperation and in removing overlapping functions. By virtue of its mandate, this is a permanent challenge for ECOSOC.

A step forward in this respect was again taken at the recently concluded Dialogue on Financing for Development. Coherence is a requirement for cooperation at all levels. It is important to increase economic investments in development cooperation and use also other measures to boost the economic activity of developing countries.

The international community has more clearly expressed its willingness to help solve the debt problems of developing countries. The recent decision by leading industrialized countries to cancel debts of the countries that are the poorest and the most indebted is a significant step. Finland is also prepared to support the implementation of this decision.

In order to be sustainable, the development of a nation must grow on its own merits, the nation must stand on its own feet. Strong democratic states that respect human rights, provide good governance and social justice create the basis for economic enterprise.

People, especially young people, dream about providing for themselves and their families a proper living through decent work. Unfortunately, it is a dream that often still remains just a dream. Making employment a global objective alongside economic growth has still not been achieved. Promotion of employment has been referred to in the charters of many international organizations, but all too often employment takes second place in day-to-day activities. We need to examine the impacts that globalization has on employment and political will to cure unemployment. Cross-border movement of people needs also our attention.

Only states and regions with sufficient economic capacity are able to develop well-functioning economic activity and economic exchange. Consequently, economic and trade-policy organizations have to come to terms with the developing countries, especially those that are least developed. Agriculture and the textile sector have a key role here.

Sustainable development, including environmental issues, must be integrated even more closely into national and international development programmes. It is important to remember that the major steps in eradicating poverty are still clean water, sufficient nutrition, decent homes and decent work. Climate change has also social consequences.

We need the UN to have a strong role in the management of global environmental issues. I consider it highly important that this autumn we could take a decision to start negotiations with a view to establishing a UN agency for environment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The reform of the work of the Economic and Social Council must now be undertaken as part of the reform of the UN system as a whole. Although the reform of the Security Council has attracted most of the attention, it must not be allowed to overshadow other issues. ECOSOC must boldly address the problems of countries ravaged by crises and poverty. It must also have a serious look at its own house and be ready for the reform. This is essential for ECOSOC to be able to regain the authority given by the UN Charter – and to be able to play its role in the implementation of broad security and of the broad development agenda.

The Council plays an important part in the promotion of global dialogue and partnerships. This requires closer cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions and with the World Trade Organization as well as with civil society and the private sector. On the other hand, the Council must boost guidance of the work of the UN's operative agencies to eliminate overlaps and to optimise the use of the available but often limited resources.

I welcome the Secretary-General's proposal on creating a Peace Building Commission, and so does the European Union. It is important for the UN to be able to provide more efficient support for the transition of countries in crisis towards peace and social construction. This work will require guidance on the part of both the Security Council and ECOSOC.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I feel it is highly important for the European Union and other regional organizations to take an active part in globalization, in defending its achievements and in correcting its shortcomings. The conclusions of the June European Council meeting confirm that the Millennium Plus Five Summit is important for us Europeans and that we expect much from it.

The European Council has reiterated its strong support for an efficient multilateral system and for the reform of the UN as an institution. The European Union has also decided to increase its public development aid and has set clear numerical goals for the ODA increase. We hope that other developed countries will take up the challenge efficiently and as soon as possible.

When Finland takes up the Presidency of the European Union about one year from now, the UN and the Millennium Goals will have a high priority in our work. One of the very first tasks of Finland's Presidency will be to coordinate the cooperation between the EU Member States in the UN Economic and Social Council. As relates reforming the Economic and Social Council, we have some experience from our previous ECOSOC presidency. For this reason too, I appreciate the opportunity to attend this meeting, and I will convey the results of discussions here to my European colleagues.

Let's make the Major Event this autumn a positive and effective development experience for all of us and for the United Nations. We must work together to translate goals into reality. The September summit is a continuation of the Millennium Summit – a process towards a safer and a fairer world for us and for our children.