

Opening Statement by

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PRESIDENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

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“Coherent Development Cooperation: Maximizing Impact in a Changing Environment”

Expectations for the Development Cooperation Forum in 2010

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you, Excellency, for giving me the floor. I would like to start by thanking the Government of Finland for hosting this High Level Symposium.

We are meeting during a rather uncertain time. Despite the hesitant signs of recovery, some countries are still in the midst of the crisis or suffering from its impact.

In such times, there is the fear that Member States will fall back to isolationism and policies to protect their own economies at the expense of broader development goals. Instead, multilateralism is never more important than during times of crises. Never is international solidarity so much needed.

This is why your deliberations these two days take great urgency. This symposium is the last milestone on the road to the Development Cooperation Forum of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. On 29 and 30 June, Ministers and senior development cooperation officials will gather in New York to debate issues related to development cooperation. This will be the opportunity to pinpoint positive developments as well as causes for concern and areas where greater efforts are called for.

This Helsinki symposium will pave the ground for an innovative and action oriented discussion at the DCF in at least three important ways. Firstly, it is geared towards promoting development cooperation. Secondly, it aims at promoting coherence in development cooperation policies and activities. Thirdly, it will review ways to improve the accountability of donors vis-à-vis developing countries, and vice versa.

My **first** point is thus that the underlying objective of this symposium is promoting development cooperation in times of crisis – which is going to be a motto at the upcoming DCF.

The signs of recovery that we saw not so long ago brought us hope for our work in development. Even though this global economic recovery is tentative, I feel that this is a

time when we should gear our efforts and set the stage to ensure that the recovery is sustainable and the distribution of its benefits more equitable.

The mandate set for the Development Cooperation Forum by the 2005 United Nations World Summit outcome aims to do precisely that. And, in the current global economic landscape it is vital that the Development Cooperation Forum and today's high level symposium fulfil it

We are merely five years away from 2015—the deadline all of us together agreed upon for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The economic crisis in addition to the food and fuel crises, along with the damage done by climate change not only threatens progress towards the MDGs, rather, some parts of the world have also seen reversals in their hard won gains.

Nevertheless, amidst such a sombre scenario, there are stories of success. But, all of us here know that renegeing on aid commitments will prove to be devastating for poor countries. While the amount of ODA available is directly linked to the Gross National Income of donor countries, it is heartening to note that despite the crisis, aid was sustained in 2009. This momentum needs to be accelerated so that the targets agreed by world leaders at the United Nations and G-8 summits are reached.

The **second** point I would like to highlight is that the focus of this symposium, policy coherence, is at the heart of the mandate of the DCF.

Delivering on our aid commitments will not have an impact on the ground, unless complementary policies and institutions are in place. Mutually supportive policies on trade, debt, investment, technology, climate change, food security, migration and systemic issues are critical if development cooperation is to have a meaningful impact.

Fostering coherence is especially important when we have seen so many new actors emerge in development cooperation. For example, private philanthropy has brought us much success in development. It is nevertheless important to improve the coherence and impact of all actors that are part of the international development cooperation community to bring about the desired results and benefits for those that need it most. I would especially like to see what has worked in the area of private philanthropy and whether the results can be adapted across countries and/or scaled up.

Dear participants,

This symposium will also look at ways to improve accountability between donor and recipients of aid.

In order to maximize the impact of development cooperation, there has to be trust and transparency among all actors. Partners in development cooperation need to be accountable to each other, and must be held responsible for their actions. Many donors monitor closely the performance of recipient countries in order to determine the quantity of their development assistance. On the other hand, their aid allocation mechanisms are not

always transparent and recipient countries do not have the wherewithal to hold providers responsible for the consequences of their policies.

I believe that these deficiencies need to be addressed urgently. I know that the Development Cooperation Forum has already broken new ground in addressing these issues. Yet, in an ever evolving global economic scenario, we need to be efficient, translating our ideas into action. This is the **third** reason why this symposium is paving the way for a successful debate at the Development Cooperation Forum.

The Development Cooperation Forum is actually a platform to discuss how commitments by aid providers are being abided to. It also reviews how recipients are complying with their own commitments on aid effectiveness.

A missing piece in the debate on mutual accountability in development cooperation has been gender concerns. I particularly welcome that this symposium will shed light on whether and how development cooperation is advancing the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It is important to know discuss how to better track progress in making this happen. I trust that the Development Cooperation Forum will amplify your conclusions in this area.

Our common challenges require concerted and collective response. Political will is vital. I am pleased to note that the Development Cooperation Forum and its various symposia have brought us all together—all partners in the development arena, governments of developing and developed countries, local governments, parliamentarians and civil society organizations-- along with our diverse range of ideas, initiatives and opinions on these complex matters.

I hope that through these sessions we are all inspired to act and implement our ideas to ensure a brighter future for all.

I wish you all a successful symposium.