



**PERMANENT MISSION OF FINLAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS**  
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**STATEMENT BY**

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Mr/Madam Chair, honorable Presidents, distinguished Delegates

First of all, let me align myself with the statement of the European Union.

We are all here to promote a common vision: *zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination, and zero AIDS-related deaths*. Finland is committed to making this vision a reality.

This requires putting prevention in the centre of our efforts. I would like to focus in particular on the crucial role of young people. We need to ensure that they are well equipped to make informed choices in their lives. The largest ever generation of young people in history is now entering their sexual and reproductive lives.

Young people can be positive agents of change if they are provided with the necessary opportunities and support. They need to have access to comprehensive sexuality education and youth friendly sexual and reproductive health services. Adolescents and young people need to be informed about sexuality and responsible sexual behaviour. They need to learn to respect themselves and others. They need information on gender equality, sexual orientation and prevention of sexually transmitted infections.

In Finland, comprehensive formal and informal sexuality education is offered from an early age. It has been a part of the school curriculum since the 1970s. A new national curriculum for overall Health Education – including sexual and reproductive health – became mandatory in 2006. Sexuality education is also integrated into other school subjects. From a ‘biological focus’ we are moving to a wider perspective that includes emotional and social aspects. Sexuality education in Finland is complemented by accessible school health services. A school nurse is available in a majority of schools. Thus information, on contraceptives for instance, comes from a reliable source. Municipalities are obliged to provide these services free of charge.

Young people in Finland appreciate and welcome this approach, and its results are evident: a decreasing number of teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and abortions, and a decreasing number of young people having early sexual relations.

Mr/Madam Chair,

Finland is a committed long-term supporter of UNAIDS, which has a central coordinating role in international efforts to tackle HIV/AIDS. In addition, we channel aid through the Global Fund and many NGOs that do excellent work in the area of HIV/AIDS.

Despite challenging economic times, Finland has been able to fulfill its international aid commitments. At the same time, it is obvious that we live in a resource-constrained world. In addition to traditional ODA, we must look into other sources of financing. National ownership and domestic resource mobilisation are essential. Private sector funding and innovative sources of financing offer important potential. Emerging economies should also have a role. More than ever, we also need to emphasise the effectiveness of aid, including increased cooperation between all actors. Results and efficiency are expected of all of us.

Mr/Madam Chair,

Comprehensive, people-centered policies are needed to achieve the internationally agreed development objectives. Everyone should be involved in promoting our common vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination, and zero AIDS-related deaths. In addition to governments and the UN system, this means civil society, parliamentarians, as well as the private sector.

Before concluding I want to emphasize sexual and reproductive health and rights. They are an integral part of human rights and belong to everyone without discrimination. All women and men, regardless of sexual orientation, must have the right to decide freely and responsibly about their own sexual life.

Mr/Madam Chair

Thirty years of HIV/AIDS have taught us something: Providing treatment and affordable and accessible medicines to those affected is important, but not enough. We also need comprehensive prevention. Empowered, well informed young women and men with a healthy self-esteem form a crucial part of such a comprehensive approach, and will eventually help us to achieve a world free of HIV and AIDS.

Thank you.