

Finland

luonnos 110715

Ladies & Gentlemen

Together we have made significant progress on the Millennium Development Goals. Many more boys and girls now have the opportunity to go to school, and many more people have been able to rise from extreme poverty and expand their life choices.

We certainly have a long way to go still but this progress proves we can change the world if we have a common sense of direction. That is why we need ambitious Sustainable Development Goals.

Besides common direction and common goals, we also need means of implementation. That is why this conference is so critical.

I wish to thank our host country, Ethiopia, for the excellent arrangements [and leadership in steering the process to a successful conclusion]. I would also like to thank the Ambassadors of Norway and Guyana for their efforts to finalize the outcome document.

Let me also state that Finland aligns itself with the statement of the European Union.

Madame/Mr Chair,

Each nation bears the responsibility for its own sustainable development and, ultimately, also for the means to drive development. This does not mean countries should be left alone with their challenges.

Finland remains committed to improving the living conditions and rights of the poorest and most vulnerable. We will honor our ODA commitments, including the target to reverse the declining trend of ODA to Least Developed Countries.

In international development, Finland's new government will invest in four key themes: gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; well-functioning democracies; energy, water and food security; and thriving, responsible private sector.

A considerable number of poor and fragile countries still need significant amounts of concessional financing. We will also seek better ways to leverage ODA to mobilise other resources. To that end, we have decided to invest 100 million euros annually in concessional loans to businesses operating and creating jobs in poor countries,

Madame/Mr Chair,

When we discuss resources and means of implementation, Finland would like to highlight two key aspects: one is the role of the private sector: the other is the human capacity of girls and women.

The private sector is a key engine of sustainable development. It is businesses - small and large - that create jobs, make investments and generate tax income for states.

But for the private sector to thrive, it needs the right environment. Businesses need public support services, access to finance, skilled work force, well-functioning regulatory framework, and the rule of law. Businesses also need access to global market. The Aid for Trade initiative offers possibilities to promote economic development, business and trade as well as job creation for the benefit of ordinary people

Here I would like to quote His Excellency President Kikwete of Tanzania who said during his recent visit to Finland that "aid is good, but trade is better".

The increased potential for business must be accompanied by responsible business conduct along the UN Guiding principles on Business and Human Rights. It is not just any business we want to see in developing countries; we want to see responsible businesses that take care of their employees, the environment, and pay taxes to the host government.

This goes hand in hand with increased focus on domestic resource mobilization, including broadening the tax base, increasing capacity, strengthening anti-corruption measures and curbing illicit financial flows. Many of the poorest countries need support and capacity enhancement in these efforts. Finland has expertise in these fields and is happy to share it, also by joining the Addis Tax Initiative which will be launched during this conference.

The Finnish government will also strengthen efforts to engage the Finnish private sector in sustainable development and poverty eradication, while it searches for new business opportunities. Finland's particular strength is focused on innovation-led private sector development. In partnership with Finland's private sector, we will leverage private sector innovation for development through a EUR 50 million Business with Impact programme during the next four years.

Madame/Mr Chair,

Let me now take up my second point, gender. Gender equality is not only a matter of fairness and justice; It also makes economic sense. According to research and statistics, gender equality is smart economics: it can enhance economic efficiency and improve broad range of development outcomes. Economies are also larger and more versatile when both women and men participate fully as equals.

Only economies that make full use of all their talent will remain competitive and grow. This requires that girls and boys, women and men – have equal access to

education, economic opportunities and political decision making. Women's and men's equal access to assets is one of the key issues for their empowerment and their country's economic development. This is where there are still severe gaps between women and men universally, especially with access to land. Equal inheritance, ownership and tenure laws as well as their implementation are important for economic development and for social stability.

I believe one of the secrets behind Finland's transformation from a very poor country to a high income country is the fact that both women and men are educated and participate in working life. Public services – through policies and institutions - make this possible.

Although we have come a long way in promoting gender equality, we still have a long way to go. Too many women and girls still face discrimination in their everyday lives, and too many have to endure violence at home, school or work.

Violence against women is a serious human rights violation and must to be condemned and fought back with utmost determination.

To close, Madame/Mr Chair,

Let us work together to empower our women and girls. No country can reach its full potential unless it makes full use of the remarkable capacity of its women.

Let us also work together to create the right environment for responsible businesses to thrive and create jobs and tax revenue. No country can succeed with public sector means alone..

I thank you for your attention.