



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

H.E. Kirsti Lintonen

Ambassador

**Chairperson of the Commission for Social Development
Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations**

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Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour to chair the 47th session of the Commission for Social Development. This year the theme of the Commission's session is social integration, which was one of the three core themes of the World Summit for Social Development.

This is the first year of the two-year review and policy cycle, which means that the aim is to discuss and clarify the content and meaning of the theme (social integration) in order to facilitate the negotiations on an agreed resolution on the subject at the 48th session of the Commission.

Nearly fourteen years ago world leaders agreed to - and I quote the outcome document of the World Summit for Social Development - to "promote social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security, and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons".

The solemn declaration of the Summit has not fully turned into deeds on the ground. Unfortunately, we cannot conclude that social integration has been achieved by all. In many parts of the world individuals have to face unrest or even armed conflict. Discrimination and other human rights violations persist in all our regions. Unless swift action is taken, the current global crises, be they finance, food or climate related, will have an adverse impact, particularly on the most vulnerable in our societies. We must not allow such marginalisation.

However, there have been also positive developments during the past years, in particular in the field of international co-operation and the normative framework. The Global Forum on Migration and Development brings together governments to discuss the different aspects of migration. Recent normative developments that have a positive impact on social integration include the adoption of the Declaration of the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and most recently the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

These fora and normative frameworks provide us further basis to work alongside with existing human rights commitments towards the full realisation of social integration. Focus must be set on implementing the rights enshrined in these documents. This is all the more important in order to effectively tackle the current global crises, which is also why the issue will be given special focus in our panel discussions.

The full realisation of social integration cannot be achieved without the contribution of and co-operation with the civil society. Representatives of the civil society, including non-governmental organisations – are the ones who often have best access to those marginalized in our societies.

I believe it is only through co-operation with civil society that governments can make real progress in eradicating discrimination and injustice and paving the way for true participation. We need a multi-stakeholder approach that also incorporates the private sector. The NGO Committee for Social Development has established an important practice in this regard by organising together with its partners a Civil Society Forum preceding the Commission's session. The Forum will give its input to the session today.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I encourage you all to engage in substantive and thought-provoking debate that will contribute to not only the negotiations on the policy outcome next year, but also to the actual well-being of all individuals in our societies.