

**Statement of Finland**

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## **General debate**

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Mr. President,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. First I would like to state that Finland fully aligns itself with the statement made by Slovenia on behalf of the European Union. As a member of the European Union and even before, Finland has strongly supported the work of UNCTAD in favour of the developing countries. The mid-term review of the São Paulo conference was concluded during the Finnish EU Presidency in 2006 and the President of Finland, Mrs. Tarja Halonen took an important role in the Panel of Eminent Persons of UNCTAD. Finland has also been quite active in UNCTAD's technical cooperation during the last years, especially with the Division of Africa and the Least Developed Countries. UNCTAD's cooperation programmes have for many years received a substantial part of Finland's multilateral trade-related development assistance.

2. This UNCTAD conference here in Accra is important to my country in many ways and the participation of Finland on the level of Head of State is a clear indication of this interest. Like President Halonen has repeated in many panels and discussions, we want UNCTAD to be stronger and more relevant. But this does not happen without hard decisions of focusing on the areas where UNCTAD has a clear comparative advantage.

3. I quote the key note speech of my President to the Head of Delegations the day before yesterday: "UNCTAD should concentrate to enhance its strengths in economic expertise and bring this expertise to the use of international development community. It should not try to do everything, not even in the sphere of trade and development, because there are simply not enough resources to accomplish all. Collaboration with other intergovernmental organisations and creating partnerships with non-governmental organizations and private sector would bring UNCTAD more to the mainstream of the international cooperation and dialogue. Without cooperation there is less chance for success and a risk of marginalisation. UNCTAD should actively seek cooperation within the UN family and outside of it."

4. What concerns the work program of UNCTAD for the next four years, the Millennium Declaration, the MDG's and the World Summit in 2005 should be our guiding principles. And in this context we should not forget the role of women. UNCTAD should mainstream the women and gender issues as a cross-cutting issue in its work at all levels. In the era of pressing issues like the climate change, rising food prices and energy supply, we want to remind that UNCTAD's activities and the development it promotes should always be economically, socially and ecologically sustainable.

5. Like the President of Finland expressed in the Round Table 1 on "*Globalization, development and poverty reduction: their social and gender dimensions*", we do not have to choose between social responsibility and economic competitiveness. We need both. And the both are possible at the same time. The Nordic countries - Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Iceland - are some of the clearest examples on how the combination of these two areas have brought benefits to all citizens.

6. Another reason why Finland and the Scandinavian countries in the very northern part of Europe have succeeded to develop their economies is the regional cooperation. These countries have been open to the outside world and they have for long worked in favour of regional cooperation between themselves and within Europe. We firmly believe that this is the way the developing countries should follow: to take advantage of the regional integration with their neighbouring countries and the dynamics between the regions.

7. Finland, like the whole EU, has in the past years further strengthened our partnership with Africa. A new EU-Africa Joint Strategy makes it possible to further deepen the relations between the two continents. Specifically I want to mention the promising results we have achieved together with our partners from African, Caribbean and Pacific countries in the negotiations leading to the Economic Partnership Agreements. These agreements are, and will be, the cornerstones in the European and African partnership to strengthen the African economies. In the new agreements we are building an innovative type of partnership both to improve market access for the African exporters and to strengthen the competitiveness of the African economies.

8. These new EPA agreements are based on the Cotonou agreement. They also demonstrate that we need to move forward in turning our political commitments into reality. This is the way to achieve tangible benefits to Africa. And like President Halonen stated: "We should now

concentrate in the implementation of the EPAs. It is certainly more fruitful to look forward and search opportunities in these agreements than spend our resources on criticizing them."

9. UNCTAD has a good record in the areas of investment, competition, the LDCs and the development aspects of trade. All these areas could benefit the developing countries when they implement the international agreements - like the new EPA agreements which I mentioned.

10. While UNCTAD has developed its special knowledge, there are other organisations that have a legitimate reason to deal with similar issues, with their particular interest and perspective. The United Nations itself and ECOSOC is the central forum for development dialogue which cannot be ignored. Still, UNCTAD can make a contribution on trade perspective, being part of the UN itself. This does not require any institutional changes or revised mandates, either.

11. The implementation of UNCTAD's technical assistance is closely linked to the operational activities of the UN system in the field and the "One UN" initiative. The donor coordination, harmonization of aid programmes, and the impact evaluation are all critical issues that are under scrutiny in many organisations. Finland closely follows these areas in the work of the United Nations including UNCTAD.

12. Finland is encouraging UNCTAD to join the forces with the other UN agencies or other relevant partners so that the UNCTAD inputs would become integrated to the common efforts and, thereby, they would have increased impact and visibility. There are existing coordination mechanisms, like the UN Development Group, which is a vehicle to harmonize the development activities of the various UN agencies. Broader questions of system-wide coherence and synergy are dealt by the Chief Executives' Board for Coordination, where UNCTAD is participating as well.

13. The year 2008 will be crucial for the global response to climate change. The outcome of the negotiations in Bali was a breakthrough but the real challenge lies ahead: We have less than two years to come to a follow-up international agreement to combat climate change. It is clear that all countries need to contribute to this effort but we also need to help each other with this demanding task. And we need to act with urgency. UNCTAD is not a forum for climate change but along with the other UN agencies it should do its part. UNCTAD also has to take

into consideration the environmental and climatic effects of its work. We all must work towards the same goal.

14. Another acute situation we face today are the rising food prices, which threaten to slow down the progress we have made in recent years on development. This has shown us how important it is to prioritize agriculture in national development strategies. UNCTAD should continue to take into account the rising food prices in its analytical and research work.

15. We have now for two years discussed the strengthening of UNCTAD. Now, here in Accra, we have to decide how to do this. If there are not enough signs that UNCTAD will change in the near future, there is a risk that more countries will lose their interest in UNCTAD. It would be a true paradox if a UN organization which is the focal point of the UN system for the integrated management of trade and development, would lose this role. On the contrary, UNCTAD has all the possibilities to become stronger.

To conclude, Mr. President,

16. Let there be no doubt that Finland is fully committed to play its part in making UNCTAD an effective organisation that will deliver to the benefit of all developing countries. Our presence here with the highest level is a proof of this commitment. We would like to stress - once more - that the ongoing reform efforts should in no way diminish the status of UNCTAD; on the contrary, these efforts will ensure its continued efficiency, effectiveness and relevance.