

LDC FUTURE FORUM

Helsinki, 6.10.2021

Opening Remarks

Mr. Pekka Haavisto, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great privilege and pleasure for Finland to host the first-ever LDC Future Forum in Helsinki. I am honoured to address this Forum with high-level policy makers, distinguished academics, and other colleagues across the world.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for organizing the Forum in collaboration with UNU-WIDER and the SDSN (Sustainable Development Solutions Network).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have lived through decades of global progress in fighting poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic is now threatening to reverse many of these gains.

To help the Least Developed Countries out of the pandemic is essential for the continued development of the LDCs. In this task, multilateral cooperation is crucial.

Finland has supported the global response to the pandemic by bilateral commitments and via the European Union's Team Europe -package. As part of the Team Europe, Finland is beginning the donations of 3,65 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines during this month of October. The political and financial support to the United Nations is particularly important in our global response. Finland has so far supported global efforts to alleviate the COVID-crisis by over 110 million euros, and we are currently preparing additional financial and in kind support, including vaccine donations.

Dear Friends,

Peace and development go hand in hand. This holds especially true for fragile states, which have a formidable development challenge. There are 57 fragile countries of which 13 are considered to be extremely fragile and caught in a cycle of violence and conflict. In recent years we have also witnessed a spike in politically-motivated violence. This means that we simply must invest more in conflict prevention and sustaining peace.

Human rights, accountable, effective and inclusive institutions, economic foundations and the capacity of states to deliver services are needed to address state fragility. Fostering resilience at all levels has become increasingly important given the fact we are facing complex challenges in an unstable world.

Finland has in recent years increasingly focused our aid in countries where fragility is an important feature, such as Myanmar, Somalia, Palestinian territories, Mozambique and Ethiopia. Afghanistan is a grave concern both in terms of human rights and democracy, but also in economic and societal terms. [Another worrying trend is seen in Lebanon that has become one of the 34 most fragile states.]

Aligning development aid, humanitarian assistance, crisis management and diplomacy is a key to promote sustainable solutions in fragile contexts.

Excellencies,

Finland is firmly committed to promoting and defending democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, internally and abroad. This commitment is enshrined in our Constitution. Finland's own experience demonstrates that democratic institutions, human rights and the rule of law are the cornerstones for peace and development.

Democracy and the rule of law are enablers of sustainable development. Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda highlights the importance of the fundamental values for ensuring peaceful and inclusive development for all.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs has a long history of cooperation in this field with various partner countries including with civil society actors. In order to enhance our support, the Ministry has recently established, in collaboration with the University of Helsinki, a Rule of Law Center. The main purpose of the new Center is to support our partners in the strengthening of legal institutions required for building peaceful, inclusive, and just societies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Finland is currently seeking a seat on the UN Human Rights Council for the term 2022–2024. The core message of our campaign, “A Diverse World, Universal Human Rights”, highlights the principle of universality of human rights.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Climate change is one of the biggest global challenges of our time and the associated security threats are increasingly being recognized. Natural disasters exacerbated by climate change, extreme weather events and environmental degradation often worsen the living conditions and human rights of already vulnerable people. For many LDCs and SIDS (Small Island Developing States) climate change is already an existential question.

Water can affect peace and security, however, it can also be a tool for peace. Water diplomacy can be used as a preventive peace mediation tool. It can provide additional means to tackle water-related tensions and facilitate collaboration between countries sharing joint water bodies.

The Water Convention (Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes) has played a pivotal role in supporting water cooperation. With its opening for accession by all United Nations Members States, the Water Convention offers a global platform for exchange on transboundary water issues and for supporting the implementation of international water law. I encourage all countries to join the agreement.

Dear Friends,

The impact of climate change on food security is already visible – the conditions for food production are deteriorating in many parts of the world and the number of hungry people is on rise. We all need to work hard to ensure that global and local food systems can provide sustainable healthy food for everyone in a changing climate. Food security plays an important role in maintaining peace. The resilience of food systems to climate change, conflicts and pandemics needs to be strengthened. This was made very clear at the UN Food Systems Summit in September.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Finland, I would like to thank you all - the organizers and the participants - for convening in Helsinki to discuss pathways to sustainable development from the viewpoint of the LDCs.

I sincerely hope that the academic papers and the discussions at the LDC Future Forum will greatly contribute to a successful outcome of the LDC5 Conference in Doha in January 2022. Finland is proud for the opportunity to contribute to this process by hosting this meeting. I wish you all a very successful and fruitful as well as pleasant stay in our capital Helsinki, also called Pearl of the Baltic Sea!

Thank you for your attention!