

S U O M I



F I N L A N D

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United Nations Commission on the
Status of Women
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Item 3 (a) "Financing for gender equality and
the empowerment of women"**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT BY

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MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH OF FINLAND

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Finland associates itself fully with the statement made earlier on behalf of the European Union by the distinguished representative of Slovenia.

The UN plays a crucial role in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. Together with the other Nordic countries, Finland supports the recommendation of the High Level Panel to strengthen UN activities on gender equality. UN system needs to be more responsive, coherent and accountable at all levels. We need to identify the gaps in delivery at the country level and examine the ways with which the UN can best address those gaps.

The empowerment of women and gender equality are pre-requisites for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Men and women must have equal opportunities in all spheres of life. Gender mainstreaming is one key measure in achieving this. The Finnish Government as a whole is committed to make determined efforts to promote equality in all its decision-making.

Promoting gender equality and empowerment of women requires direct budget allocations. The Government Programme states that more resources will be allocated to government agencies and women's organisations engaged in promoting gender issues. Year 2007 Finnish Parliament also approved a law that regularises the largest women's organisations in Finland a yearly state subsidy.

Apart from direct funding for gender equality, the gender perspective should be incorporated into all economic planning and budgets. In Finland, the Government has committed to take steps to ensure that the gender perspective is mainstreamed across budget procedures, law drafting and other major projects from the very beginning. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health that is in charge of gender equality issues, has worked together with the Ministry of Finance to develop gender budgeting forward in Finland. This cooperation has proved to be very fruitful.

As a result of the work the Ministry of Finance now states in its regulation for the drafting of the budget that a summarised review of significant activities in terms of gender impact must be included in the commentaries to the main title of expenditure. This means that each ministry must explain the actions that have gender relevance in their budget proposals. The Finnish national budget for the year 2008 has been prepared in accordance with the new guidelines that take the gender perspective into account.

In Finland the mainstreaming of gender perspective is now part of the standard budget procedure, it is not a parallel and separate process. Hence, the civil servants in charge of budget formulation take part in this work. It also means that the gender perspective is part of the official follow-up of the budget. For example, the overall judgement of the budget proposal made by the Government financial controller's function includes now an assessment of integrating gender perspective. A summary of significant effects in terms of gender impact is also to be reported in the national statement of accounts.

Furthermore, gender equality is a cross cutting issue in all Finnish development cooperation. We pay attention to the Finnish support's impact on gender equality in all our cooperation, be it a contribution to a UN organisation, budget support, bilateral project or any other form of funding. All of us donors should be very aware of the impact of our financing, which needs to reach both women and men. Otherwise development does not take place. This also applies to the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Lastly, Finland welcomes the emerging issue theme: "Gender perspective on climate change". Poor women's disadvantages – their limited access to resources, especially to land and land ownership, restricted rights, limited mobility and muted voice in shaping decisions – make them highly vulnerable to climate change. However, women are not just helpless victims but also powerful agents of change. Women's knowledge and responsibilities related to natural resource management can be critical to community survival. All aspects related to climate change should therefore include a gender perspective.