



Finland to the UN Security Council in 2013–2014

## The 56<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

### General Discussion (Item 3):

High-level plenary review of the implementation of the Beijing platform for action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the general assembly: Sharing of experiences and good practices on implementation of the platform for action, with a view to overcoming remaining obstacles and new challenges

### Statement by

H.E. Mr. Jarmo Lindén  
State Secretary  
Ministry of Education and Culture  
Finland

New York, 29 February 2012

(check against delivery)

**High-level plenary review of the implementation of the Beijing platform for action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the general assembly: Sharing of experiences and good practices on implementation of the platform for action, with a view to overcoming remaining obstacles and new challenges**

**State Secretary Jarmo Lindén, Finland**

Finland aligns herself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Chair/Madam Chairperson,

Fulfillment of women's human rights is a prerequisite for achieving a balanced society and well-being for all. Women's participation in political and economical decision-making processes has become more important and visible than ever. During the past year we have witnessed women's active and strong involvement in the Arab Spring events where women of different political, religious and social backgrounds have showed their will and readiness to demand dignity, justice and economic opportunities for themselves and their communities.

Women's economic empowerment and participation is one of UN Women's focus areas and Finland fully supports UN Women's work in this important matter. By joining our efforts internationally we can achieve what is best for women, and for the entire society. We also see that close cooperation between UN Women and CSW is essential in reaching this important goal.

Gender equality, the welfare society and success in business are closely connected. The World Economic Forum has identified Finland to be among the most competitive economies in the world. One of the factors contributing to our economic development has been paying due attention to gender equality. This has allowed both women and men to take effectively part in the economy.

Finland is convinced that education is an essential instrument that gives women and girls equal opportunities in all aspects of life. In Finland there is an obligation for each educational institution to compile a gender equality plan. This is a good and constructive way to promote gender equality through institutions, and engage young people to gender awareness work.

Non-governmental youth organizations have a vital role to play in promoting gender equality; and should be considered by governments as partners in this endeavor. Girls and young women should be encouraged to participate in NGO activities as a means to promote their awareness and self-esteem. It is important to ensure that public funding for NGOs is allocated on an equal basis, so that it responds to the needs of both girls and boys. We also have to make sure that women participate in the rural policy-making processes. Rural institutions and women's organization are important here.

A woman or a girl can only be an active participant in the society, if she has the right and knowledge needed to make decisions concerning her own body, sexuality, and reproductive health. This increases possibilities of women and girls to acquire a good education and to find decent work outside their homes. Therefore Finland consistently supports the advancement of sexual and reproductive health and rights. It is very regrettable that we still do not have enough progress on MDG5, which aims at improving maternal health. Too many women die of causes that would be easy to prevent. This is a grave reminder of the severe discrimination women and girls encounter in society. We must continue our tireless efforts to reach the MDG5.

Women's participation in rural development is especially important. Studies show that women play an instrumental role in safeguarding scarce natural resources, thus women have a crucial role in promoting socially, economically and ecologically sustainable development. Women's potential must be fully utilized in the Rio+20 process, and their participation in it must be strengthened.

Violence against women remains a serious challenge everywhere, both in Finland and in many other countries, both in cities as well as in the countryside. Finland is committed to combat this problem both nationally and through international agreements, such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Council of Europe's European Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic violence.

Finally, we must remember that men and boys play a crucial role in women's empowerment. We must mobilize men and boys to take part in our work for gender equality. Joint commitments and common goals require the support of everybody. In the end they also give the best results.

Thank you Mr. Chair/Madam Chairperson