



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

MEETING OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS  
5-9 MAY, 2014

Statement of Finland by Ms Kirsti Aarnio, Ambassador, Post-2015  
[check against delivery]

First of all, I would like to align my delegation with the statement of the EU presented yesterday. We would like to congratulate the Co-Chairs of the Open Working Group on their continuous efforts on Focus Area 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment.

The 58<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women called for a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women as well as for gender equality to be integrated through targets and indicators into all goals of the new development framework. We warmly support this approach. This should benefit from systematic disaggregation of data by sex throughout the framework.

The post-2015 goals should be guided by human rights principles with women's rights at the centre. We would like to see the focus on human rights to be strengthened across the whole framework. It should lead to the elimination of discriminatory legislation and practices and to attention to the needs and rights of girls. We also support the statements of those delegations – which were many – who requested that sexual and reproductive health and rights are among the targets. We consider it important that gender equality is integrated also in economy and environment related focus areas, including women's equal access to natural resources and their management.

We are pleased to see many of the targets important for Finland being included in the framework, especially elimination of violence against women; equal employment and other economic as well as social and political opportunities and rights; equal education; women's leadership; water, sanitation and hygiene. We would like to note also the importance of the target on gender responsive budgeting.

On water and sanitation, I would make the following remarks:

- Finland supports a stand-alone goal for water and sanitation. We welcome the holistic approach of the proposal, which emphasizes the universal nature of the SDGs: we need ambitious targets for countries with different national realities.
- We welcome that the WASH target covers now also the "H" - hygiene, which has such high benefits for health, welfare and productivity.
- One of the shortcomings of the MDGs was uneven progress. We should make sure under each SDG that they reduce inequalities by making this aim explicit and not leaving only to indicators. Thus we propose to add to the WASH target "progressively eliminating inequalities". This would cover not only women and girls, but rural-urban, wealth quantiles, different disadvantaged groups like people with disabilities.
- We would also like to mention "households, schools and health facilities" to make it more clear what we mean with universal access.

- Taking into account the enormous positive multiplier effect that ending open defecation has in communities and societies, we would like the co-chairs to consider whether ending open defecation would merit to be included in targets, not only on as an indicator for universal WASH.
- Last time, number of delegations including ours stressed the importance of promoting transboundary cooperation. There are 260 significant transboundary basins, of which only 1/3 has some kind of cooperative agreement. But many delegations also expressed caution. Knowing that the issue is sensitive, we would like to propose to set a target at global level to increase number of basins with cooperative arrangements by x %. This would acknowledge the relevance of transboundary cooperation, but allow step by step approach where those who are willing can take bigger role.
- In Rio+20 we agreed on concise and easy to communicate goals. In this spirit we propose to streamline the focus area of water and sanitation in the following way, leaving some of the issues not out but to be covered also at the indicator level. Thus (f) could be as an indicator under (b), and (g) could be under (c).
- Apart from these observations, we support the proposed targets. Besides WASH, IWRM and transboundary cooperation, management of wastewater, improvement of water efficiency, reduction of emissions to waters and ecosystems approach in general are all important elements of a water SDG, and DRR contributes well to mainstreaming of climate issues to goals.