

High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
National Voluntary Review 3

Tuesday 19 July 2016 at 15:15 – 16:35

Mr. Kimmo Tiilikainen, Minister of Agriculture and the Environment,
Vice-Chair of the National Commission on Sustainable Development,
Finland

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

As the Vice-Chair of the National Commission on Sustainable Development, I am proud to provide the first National Voluntary Presentation of Finland on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

For us, human rights and gender equality are at the core of the implementation. Finland is ready to take ambitious steps in implementing the Agenda in a comprehensive, integrated and transformative way. Let me now present to you our plans, mechanisms, objectives and challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year's theme – leaving no one behind – has been and is the cornerstone of the **Finnish welfare society**. We have made a conscious decision to aim for a society that provides everyone with equal opportunities to attain wellbeing, education and a livelihood. It has been possible by providing a safety net – the Finnish social security system.

Still, differences in health and income require continuous attention in Finland.

Another key factor in ensuring that no-one is left behind is the universal access to **high-quality and inclusive education**. In Finland, tuition is free at every level of education. We were also the first country to serve school meals to all children for 60 years now.

I am proud to be able to say that Finland has a long tradition of **promoting gender equality**. Finnish women entered in political decision making—already in 1906. Currently 42 percent of the Members of Parliament are women. For us, gender equality means, for example, affordable and public daycare for children, non-discrimination of women in the labour market and mainstreaming gender perspective into all policy sectors. It also means the realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights. On the other hand, combatting violence against women and promoting equal pay for equal work represent challenges, and are thus the key objectives in our gender equality policy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In early 2016, the Prime Minister's Office took responsibility for coordinating the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda. A **coordination mechanism** was created, where all Ministries are involved and two multi-stakeholder committees, the National Commission on Sustainable Development and the Development Policy Committee, play a key role.

A large number of representatives from civil society, political parties,

business and industry, labour unions, academia, cities, local and regional authorities as well as our indigenous people Sámi are represented in these fora. The Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development was established already in 1993. The **multi-stakeholder approach** has been the cornerstone of the Commission's work from the very beginning.

However, we have recognized that we need to extend our outreach efforts with some important stakeholders in Finland. These include children and youth, immigrants and people with disabilities. We are interested in learning how other countries have included these groups in the implementation.

The Finnish delegation in the HLPF has two Civil Society Organizations, Kepa and Kehys. **I will now give a floor to Rilli Lappalainen, who will now present some views on behalf of civil society representatives.**

[Rilli puhuu pöytästä 1 min]

Thank you, Rilli, for your remarks. We need active civil society that keeps the Government on its toes.

Even if we have now been forced to decrease our spending on official development assistance due to serious economic constraints, we are still committed to the zero point seven -target. Finland has achieved the zero point two ODA level to the least developed countries, and we aim to maintain this level also in the future.

As you pointed out, policy coherence is extremely important in the

implementation. Government policies and legislation, as well as implementation of international agreements and commitments must take the Agenda 2030 into consideration. This spring, all ministries reported on their existing policies and measures to implement the 2030 Agenda. This **mapping exercise** served as a good basis for the national work.

Also, this spring the Government commissioned an independent **gap analysis** providing an overview of the baseline, challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation. An extensive indicator-based analysis was used to identify those goals and targets requiring most improvement in Finland, and those in which we can share our expertise. As part of the process, stakeholders were asked to provide their views on Finland's challenges and strengths.

As a result, researchers summarized that Finland's particular **strengths** lie in quality education and knowledge, as well as in societal stability and good governance. It is now important to ensure that our performance stays high in these areas.

Combating climate change and use of natural resources as well as ensuring economic development and high employment were recognized as Finland's particular **challenges**. In these fields, development has been unsatisfactory in recent years. This is a signal to us, the political decision-makers, to speed up our efforts. The national implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement is an important tool in these efforts.

The results of the gap analysis give guidance to Finland on which issues to focus on during the implementation. The results will be analysed and discussed in a participatory political process, keeping in

mind the national relevance and urgency of action. At the same time, we need to ensure that the whole 2030 Agenda will be addressed within the next 15 years, as all SDGs are deeply interlinked.

The participatory political process will lead to the adoption of a **National Implementation Plan for the 2030 Agenda**. Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development will be the key driver in designing the national plan.

Finland is committed to providing a systematic, transparent and participatory **follow-up and review** of the implementation of 2030 Agenda. To ensure accountability to citizens and the global community, the progress and achievements will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. The role of the National Parliament is fundamental to this end.

For over 15 years, **sustainable development indicators** have been Finland's key tools in monitoring and assessment of sustainable development. The national indicators will be revised this year to serve the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda and complement the global indicators.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As part of the process to prepare the implementation plan, two related important strategy revisions took place early this year. The revisions were undertaken with stakeholder consultations.

In February, the **Government renewed its development policy**. The policy is guided by the 2030 Agenda, and is explicitly linked to the SDGs.

The core goal of Finland's development policy is to eradicate extreme poverty and to reduce inequality. In our development policy we follow human rights based approach.

Four priority areas have been selected. They relate to the rights of women and girls, improving the economies of developing countries, supporting the creation of democratic societies and good governance; and increasing food security, better access to water and energy and the sustainability of natural resources.

Another strategy revision was that our **National Strategy for Sustainable Development** was updated to be better in line with the 2030 Agenda. The strategy is called '**Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development**'. Eight objectives of the Commitment include all the 17 SDGs in a comprehensive and interlinked manner.

The Society's Commitment provides not only the strategic framework for Finland, but also a **new partnership model and tool**. It aims at boosting ownership, concrete action, innovative solutions and impact throughout the society.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I will conclude by showing you a video about the Society's Commitment. We must all be ready to do things better. Finland is committed to do its part.

[video, 4,5 min]

I thank you for your attention.