



HLPF 2020

Opening of the Ministerial Segment

Keynote remarks by H.E Ms Sanna Marin, Prime Minister of Finland

Secretary-General, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to speak at the opening session today.

Soon, after this opening session, I will present Finland's second Voluntary National Review detailing our progress on the 2030 Agenda. I do hope that our Report will inspire others.

Today, even in the midst of crisis, it is important for us to recognise and appreciate our recent successes as a global community. The adoption of both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015 were remarkable achievements.

Since then, the international rules-based order has come under pressure, and even been put into question. Yet no one has presented better alternatives than multilateral institutions and the UN system. The crisis we face cannot be solved through national, unilateral measures.

In this regard, I would like to express our gratitude for the leadership the Secretary-General has provided during the recent turbulent months. Secretary-General Guterres has outlined a clear way forward and been a voice of reason, calm and clarity.

Now, in its 75th year, the United Nations is needed perhaps more than ever. The high-level meetings in September and October will be an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the core values of the United Nations – peace, security and human rights. The Biodiversity Summit will be especially relevant in addressing biodiversity loss and environmental degradation, which are the root causes of the current COVID-19 crisis.

The 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity are essential tools for ensuring a more sustainable and greener recovery. We can also view them as our global roadmaps.

For Finland, the European Union stands as an example of how countries become stronger through cooperation. Solutions are more effective that way. The European Green Deal is a blueprint for a climate-sustainable future, and we are fully committed to delivering on it.

At a more regional level, the Nordic countries have been working on a blueprint for better and greener recovery under the header "Building Back Better and Greener". We aim to share it widely as one model for reaching our goals.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our generation of global leaders will be judged by the decisions we make over the course of this year. Our children's destiny must not be shaped by accelerating climate change, more global inequality, and human suffering on an unforeseen scale. We must be determined to make choices we can defend based on the best available science.

Sustainable development does not depend on individual choices alone, but on politics. We need to call on all stakeholders to join in the effort. The need for cooperation is also highlighted in the Global Sustainable Development Report.

This brings me to one important aspect in our approach to sustainable development. This is the Nordic welfare model. It has been key to our success.

Finland aims to become a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society by 2030. Our policies are ambitious, starting with the objective of achieving carbon neutrality by 2035.

We have an open economy that can adapt to changes. Our readiness to adapt is built through resilience, which fundamentally depends on trust within society.

We use carbon pricing, energy taxation and other similar instruments as needed – both nationally and within an EU context, as part of the EU Green Deal.

However, when we look at it from a Nordic perspective, these measures are only part of the picture. Comprehensive social security, high-quality public healthcare and equal opportunities in education are important. Understood this way, equality builds trust in the idea that the circumstances you are born into do not define your future. We can face change without fear.

For instance, we cannot get emissions down if inequality goes up at the same time. A rise in fuel taxes in Finland came with lowering the income tax for the lowest-earning citizens. Another example: continuous learning, employment services and on-the-job learning are part of this equation and have been included in our Government's climate roadmap.

This for us is a fair and just transition. It makes sense to take a holistic view of sustainable development. The Nordic welfare model boils down to concrete choices in society. Without political decisions, change will not happen.

I understand that the Nordic welfare model is not widespread on a global scale. The transition to sustainability will not be equally easy everywhere.

Globally, the pandemic has demonstrated how central the principle of leaving no one behind (LNOB) must be in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

According to the Secretary-General's SDG Progress report, an estimated 40 to 60 million people will be pushed back into extreme poverty. There is a risk that we will see the first increase in global poverty in more than 20 years. To prevent this crisis from escalating, we must accelerate

the reform of the UN development system so it can deliver effectively. In this regard, I am pleased to announce our decision to finance the UN Covid-19 Response and Recovery Trust Fund.

We need to act fast to avoid food crises by transforming global food systems, promoting a more efficient use of resources and ensuring healthier diets for all.

People in vulnerable situations are the most affected by the current crisis. We need to do our utmost to ensure that no one is left behind. This concerns, for instance, the situations of persons with disabilities. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons also continue to be among those most at risk. **Civil society** plays a very significant role in reaching those left furthest behind.

Gender equality is an essential part of **leaving no one behind**. As long as women's rights and especially sexual and reproductive health and rights continue to be challenged, we cannot achieve gender equality and we will not achieve sustainable development.

Dear Participants,

I would like to draw your attention to three positive global developments in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda:

First, **the role of cities in the HLPF has become more and more prominent.** New York was the first city to present its Voluntary Local Review (VLR), and the capital of Finland, Helsinki, has followed suit together with many other cities around the world. From Finland, we have two cities, Espoo and Turku, reporting this year.

Second, **the engagement of Finance Ministers in the 2030 Agenda has been inspiring.** The Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action was established at Finland's initiative in spring 2019 and is co-chaired by Finland and Chile. The Coalition now has over 50 Members from all continents. We welcome new Members to the Coalition! Its goal is to bring climate change into economic policies and financing solutions. At the moment, the Coalition is analysing the implications of the COVID crisis on climate policies. This work will help countries in their green recovery measures.

Third, the role of innovations. **Innovations – of a technological or social nature – are vital in responding to the complex challenges of humanity.** The Secretary-General has rightly placed innovations and digital cooperation within the core activities of the Organization. Based on Finland's own experience and our values, we have also made a long-term commitment to digital cooperation and innovation at the global level. The SDGs cannot be achieved without innovations. Finland is very proud to host a growing number of UN innovation activities.

Before concluding, I would like to share with you three reflections on sustainable development in Finland:

First, **Finland's long tradition in the work on behalf of sustainability.** I am the current Chair of our multi-stakeholder National Commission on Sustainable Development, which has operated since 1993 under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

Second, the **need to think in concrete terms**. We have taken steps toward **integrating sustainable development into the State Budget**. State finances must support our objectives. We are committed to sustainable development budgeting as we work to **transform Finland into a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society by 2030**.

Third, the importance of engaging citizens in active dialogue about sustainable development. I will soon present **Finland's second Voluntary National Review (VNR)** describing our progress on the 2030 Agenda. Successes and gaps have been identified, and the process itself has taught us a lot. Equally important for us has been the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders in the preparation of the VNR Report, including in the actual writing process.

Dear Friends, to conclude,

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted almost five years ago. The theme of this year's HLPF implies that **it is high time to boost implementation and deliver progress**. Governments must demonstrate their commitment to accelerated action and transformative change. **As the Prime Minister of Finland, I would like to express our sincere commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.** *We need the political will and the courage to act.*