



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

**MEETING OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS,**

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**Statement of Finland by Ms Kirsti Aarnio, Ambassador, Post-2015 Coordinator**

We fully align ourselves with the statement delivered by the European Union and its Member States.

We would like to thank the co-chairs for the two documents and especially for the report on focus areas. This document reflects a great wealth of items, which could be included in the future Sustainable Development Goals. We would like, at this stage, to mention a few areas that merit further elaboration.

We believe that the Sustainable Development Goals should address first of all poverty eradication, sustainable development and reduction of all forms of inequalities. Tackling inequalities requires addressing **structural causes behind them** such as discrimination. A central factor for reduction of inequalities is **social protection** which should be provided to all. Special attention should be paid to **people with disabilities**.

The future development agenda should be transformational, universal and based on **human rights**. Adopted treaties should be considered as minimum standards for a life with dignity. Human rights should be considered throughout all goals. One important part of human rights are **sexual and reproductive rights**, which concern us all, and that is why they should be reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals and the future post-2015 agenda.

We are of the opinion that **peaceful and safe societies** are precondition to sustainable development and poverty eradication. It is for this reason that we firmly believe that peace and stability must be reflected more strongly on the agenda. Rule of law, good governance and democracy are closely linked to peaceful and non-violent societies, but also to many other themes. Considering the importance of these issues suggest placing them in a focus area of their own.

There is no sustainable development without **gender equality and women's empowerment**. These should be mainstreamed throughout all Sustainable Development Goals and at the same time they should form a stand-alone goal. Inter-linkages of gender equality with areas such as peaceful and non-violent societies, food security, employment and decent work, etc. should be strengthened. In addition, **sexual and reproductive health and rights** of all individuals must be respected, protected and fulfilled as stated by fifty Member States in the last Open Working Group meeting in a joint statement on "Promoting equality, including social equity, gender equality and women's empowerment".

**Economic growth** must be green and inclusive. Benefits of this growth must be distributed more equally in order to reduce inequalities. Green and inclusive growth is closely linked to the three pillars of sustainable development. We would like to emphasize the opportunities offered by **sustainable consumption and production**, for instance, by creating new markets, generating new jobs, and promoting more environmentally sound technologies.

In addition, the whole agenda needs to be **climate sensitive**. The inter-linkages between climate change and other areas, such as food security, energy, water and sanitation and sustainable cities should be strengthened. In order to achieve sustainable development, more emphasis on **disaster risk reduction and resilience** is necessary.

Finally, with regarding to **forests and forestry**, we emphasize their sustainable use and management as well as their economic, social and environmental benefits. In our opinion, placing forests under the focus area of biodiversity does not reflect adequately their importance. Therefore it would proper to form a separate focus area clustering, for instance, natural resources and ecosystems.

We would also like to pay more attention to the link between youth, quality education at all levels and decent work.

Finland will continue playing an active and constructive role in the preparations of the future development agenda.

I thank you.