



PERMANENT MISSION OF FINLAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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4th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament in New York on the General debate theme
"Placing democracy at the service of peace and sustainable development:
Building the world the people want"

Statement by

H.E. Ms. Maria Lohela
Speaker of the Parliament of
Finland

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(check against delivery)

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues and distinguished guests,

It is my great pleasure and honour to address this conference on such an important topic. The new Sustainable Development Goals present us with an enormous task but also with a unique opportunity to change the world for the better. It is a gigantic undertaking including the whole world – the developing and the developed countries – combining the economic, environmental and social aspects of the development agenda.

Despite their limitations the Millennium Development Goals have been successful in lifting hundreds of millions of people out of extreme poverty; they have reduced child and maternal mortality rates significantly and they have lifted the number of children going to school in developing regions. But the job is far from done. The new SDGs will take over in guiding us towards more united, human rights – based, egalitarian and most importantly environmentally sustainable world.

The scope of the Sustainable Development Goals consultation process reflects the scale and importance of the task. It has been a global process involving governments and a vast number of civil society organizations and other actors. More than 7 million people have taken the World We Want – survey to express their views on how they would like their future world to look like.

As difficult as it may feel psychologically, in the long run we have to be able to break free from a pure growth-based approach in measuring progress. The shift needs to be towards more well-being and happiness for the human kind as a whole. The big question is: how do we make this The New Game in Town? For sure we will need greater solidarity to end poverty and innovative solutions for sustainable management of our natural resources.

At the very core of the new development agenda lies the assumption that there can be no sustainable development without peace and peace cannot exist without sustainable development.

The heinous crimes of ISIL in Syria and Iraq are forcing millions of people to leave their homes and flee for their lives. Adding to this, already several million refugees have fled civil war, fighting and instability in many places in the Middle East and Africa. Neighboring countries and Europe are facing tremendous pressure of asylum seekers. It goes without saying that all nations have to lend a helping hand to people in distress but importantly we need to decisively address the root causes of the problem. Conflict prevention and resolution will therefore be crucial in laying a foundation on which to build a better future without persecution. The gender perspective should be incorporated in all conflict prevention and resolution efforts in line with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 of which Finland is a strong supporter.

Agreement on the Development Goals is an ambitious starting point that the world undoubtedly needs. But the key to success in this great endeavour is to ensure our unwavering commitment to the goals throughout the process.

It is in this field Parliaments can play a major role. In passing legislation, making the required budget allocations and holding governments accountable we have a number of tools at our disposal. Parliamentarians and political parties are also key actors in shaping the public opinion. Active, open and inclusive public discussion on the importance of the development agenda will help create the right climate for implementation. Indeed, this is a key element in a democratic process for a common good.

Thank you for your attention!