

Finland and Mexico sponsored Cross-regional statement on International Women's Day at the Human Rights Council

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honor of making this statement on behalf of Finland, Mexico and 97 co-sponsors.

Each year, on the 8th of March we celebrate the International Women's Day. This date provides an opportunity to take stock of the implementation of women's rights. Human rights belong to all, but still the fact is that they are not fully enjoyed by every human being. The fulfillment of human rights empowers people – and it has remarkable effects on the empowerment of women and girls.

This year marks a particularly important year for women's rights and gender equality: As we celebrate 40 years of the first world conference on the status of women (Mexico 1975), 20 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and 15 years of resolution 1325 on women, peace and security by noting the advancements made and calling out the gaps and slow progress in many areas requiring political will and resources, we are also a short time away from the final negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Every agenda in the world today should ensure the participation and leadership of women in securing effective solutions to global problems, whether poverty eradication, strengthening the rule of law, ending inequalities or participating in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Investing in women is a very smart investment. We have strong evidence and facts today to show what the positive impact of women's role and contribution is and, even more importantly, could be, across all dimensions of society. In the past 20 years girls' access to schooling has increased, and the possibilities for women to participate fully in the economic, political and social spheres of society have improved.

But still, gender discrimination is deeply rooted in our societies. Globally, women's rights and lives are too often depending on arbitrary decisions, lack of access to justice, and biased governance institutions. Girls are too often subjected to harmful practices. Too many women still live in fear, or fall victims of violence, discrimination, child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, human trafficking and sexual exploitation. All too often the violation of women's human rights goes unpunished. Women's choices over their own bodies, lives, health, education and development should be respected, in accordance with States' international human rights obligations.

All human rights for all women and girls must be protected – also for those who are subjects to multiple discrimination, in recognition that gender compounds other forms of discrimination. Women and girls who are subjected to multiple discrimination are placed in a potential situation of vulnerability and often fall victims of violence.

When discussing women's rights and gender equality more broadly, the role of men and boys must not be underestimated. Achieving gender equality is not possible without the participation of men and boys as male role models and agents of change. New strategies should be developed as how to best engage men to be more active partners in the collaboration for gender equality.

Women make up more than half of the world's population and sustainable development can't be reached without their participation. Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls as effective means to promote and protect human rights should be reflected as a stand-alone goal in the Post-2015 agenda, and mainstreamed in other goals. Achieving Gender equality requires for gender statistics that are regularly produced and provide objective evidence, but not only for that particular objective but for each and all of the goals.

International Women's Day reminds us of efforts that are needed to ensure that the potential of every girl and woman is fully realized and respected in our societies. Today is a good day to continue with this work and make sure that women's rights will be fully respected and implemented as human rights.