

24 September 2013

HDIM 2013
Working Session 3: Tolerance and Non-Discrimination II,
Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men,
Prevention of Violence against Women and Children

Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Finland to the OSCE
Mrs. Katja Pehrman

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Ms. Moderator,

In addition to the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union, let me add a few words on the Finnish national measures in promoting gender equality.

The Finnish Government's human rights policy is grounded on the universality of human rights. Human rights belong to everyone regardless of birth, gender, age, language, cultural background, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other characteristic. Our goal is to guarantee equal human rights for everyone.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland published its first Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan on 10th of June, 2013, where elimination of discrimination and greater openness and inclusion are chosen as the two cross-cutting themes of our human rights policy. We are committed to working towards the elimination of all discrimination and having close cooperation with civil society. These two themes will guide all our activities and serve as the basis for our biennial flagship projects in the near future.

The first of our biennial flagship projects is promoting women's and girls' human rights and opportunities for participation. To name a few of our commitments, Finland is committed to working actively to mainstream gender equality, promoting the political and economic participation of women, and preventing multiple discrimination against women.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs has a long tradition of strong and fruitful cooperation with civil society and human rights defenders both in Finland and abroad. We are eager to develop this cooperation further, in particular with organizations that promote the rights of women and girls as well as with women human rights defenders, paying due attention to their safety.

Equality between women and men must be a crucial part of any society: it is a cornerstone for social and economic stability and sustainability. Women and men should have equal rights and opportunities in all fields of life. Women's empowerment and equal participation benefit the society as a whole. The Finnish experience shows that enabling women to earn their own living is one of the most effective ways of empowerment.

This requires broad implementation of economic, social and cultural rights, and decisive action against open as well as hidden discrimination. Moreover, the knowledge and the right to make decisions concerning one's own body, sexuality, and reproductive health increase the possibilities of women and girls to receive an education, to know their rights and access to decent work outside their homes.

Finland will continue to pay special attention to multiple discrimination, which often affects those who are in the most vulnerable position. Finland promotes the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls, aiming at zero tolerance of all forms of violence. Special attention has to be given to the women and girls, who are subjected to multiple discrimination and are therefore especially vulnerable and often fall victims to violence.

We will also pay particular attention to improving the status of Roma women and women and girls with disabilities. Lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex women and girls have often specific challenges in exercising their rights fully and on an equal basis with others. Promoting sexual diversity in different fora is one step on the road to eliminating discrimination and promoting equal rights for everyone.

Finland also strongly supports and actively promotes the comprehensive and balanced implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 and the five other resolutions related to it. Finland has a national action plan to implement these resolutions. When participating in international crisis management activities, Finland pays particular attention to the promotion of human rights, equality, democracy and the rule of law. The status and participation of women and girls will be strengthened particularly in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, 'Women, Peace and Security'. We will devote special attention to the status of minorities and other vulnerable groups and support the proper functioning of civil society.

Ms. Moderator,

Let me conclude by inviting the meeting's participants to a side event convened by the Permanent Representation of Finland to the OSCE, in cooperation with the OSCE Office in Tajikistan. The side event is titled "*Empowering women in Tajikistan*" and it is based on the experience drawn from the extra budgetary project on Women's Resource Centers, supported by the Government of Finland, among other donors.

The participants will discuss the challenges facing women and families in Tajikistan's small towns and remote areas, focusing especially on how civil society can work for the empowerment of women and how the OSCE can support these efforts. The event will be addressed by high level speakers, among them the First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Tajikistan, Mr Nurillo Oripov, as well as Ms Ziyoda Ashurova of the Kumsangir Women's Resource Center. The side event will take place directly after this working session, at 6 p.m. in meeting room 2. I hope to see many of you there, participating actively in the discussion.

Thank you.