



PERMANENT MISSION OF FINLAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS
866 UN PLAZA, SUITE 222, NEW YORK, NY 10017 - TEL. 1-212-355-2100 - FAX 1-212-759-6156

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Statement by

H.E. Mr. Sauli Niinistö,
President of the Republic of Finland

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(check against delivery)

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, upon your election as the President of the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly. I pledge the full support of Finland to your important task.

Mr. President,

The events of the past months fill us with sadness. We have entered another grim era of conflicts. What has happened in Ukraine and in Syria and Iraq illustrates this.

The core values and rules the United Nations is based on have been violated. The crisis in Ukraine has a deep impact on the security of Europe. We have not experienced such breakdown since the tragedy of the Balkan wars. But I want to stress that Ukraine is not only a question limited to Europe.

This should – and eventually will – concern all of us. A rule-based international system is a precondition for peace and security, for human rights and development. If we cease to protect this system, it will cease to protect us. It would be a dramatic and far-reaching mistake to let our rule-based order slip towards chaos and the law of the jungle.

Unfortunately, the UN Security Council has not been able to uphold its responsibilities neither in Ukraine nor in Syria. We need to reform the Security Council. Finland supports the efforts to restrict the use of veto.

I am pleased that the General Assembly adopted the resolution on "Territorial integrity of Ukraine" on 24 March with a clear majority.

Yet the voice of this important body should have been even stronger, condemning Russia's actions and charting a way towards ending violence and restoring peace. When the territorial integrity of a Member State is violated and it loses control over a part of its own area through an illegal annexation, the Member State should be able to turn to the United Nations for justice and remedy.

De-escalation in Ukraine cannot happen without Russia's active steps. Russia should control its border and prevent the flow of arms and fighters, and thereby contribute to stabilization of the situation in Eastern Ukraine. There can be only a political solution to the crisis.

Mr. President,

As the Secretary-General has reminded us, the international community must not abandon the people of Syria. We cannot forget those who have died or those driven from their homes - half of the population in Syria. Three million Syrians have been received as refugees in the neighboring countries.

The Syrian conflict can only be solved by political means. Finland continues to give its full support to the UN's Special Envoy for Syria. Women in Syria, as in other conflict-driven countries, must be included in the peace process. We welcome women's active efforts to strengthen their voices in Syria and everywhere.

The war in Syria has severely affected the security situation in the whole region: the ISIL organization, with its horrendous terror, is a by-product of the conflict. This situation has serious consequences locally, regionally and internationally. This challenge must be tackled together through a wide-ranging international co-operation. Finland will contribute to these common efforts.

The international community showed determination last autumn after the chemical attacks in Syria. The OPCW-UN Joint Mission focused on the verification and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons program. Finland has worked alongside the Joint Mission in this demanding operation. We must remain vigilant. In order to fulfill its UN commitments as well as to comply with the CWC (Chemical Weapons Convention), Syria must take further action.

We must show that determination again. I strongly reiterate the appeal to the Security Council to refer the Syrian situation to the International Criminal Court. The ICC must be used when the national justice system is not able to deliver.

Mr. President,

These conflicts unfold at a time, when cooperation and common efforts are more needed than ever. We share the same global challenges like climate change. Ebola is another serious threat. It is critically important to us and our planet that we address them together. Here, I want to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his leadership in addressing these challenges.

Intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 agenda will commence soon. We should aspire to a new kind of global commitment to fulfill both the needs of the mankind and the planet earth. We owe this to our children and to their children.

To achieve sustainable development we need clear objectives. We need to be able to monitor our commitments in an efficient way. All resources and means should be mobilized.

We can't rely only on traditional resources any more. Public funding for development still is important for the poorest and those affected by conflicts. But at the same time, domestic resource mobilization, innovation, trade and technology and investments must play a stronger role in sustainable development.

Many countries of the global south enjoy a robust economic growth. This provides an opportunity to invest in tax systems, which, in turn, generates public resources for sustainable development. A just tax and redistribution policy is one of the most efficient ways to reduce inequalities and fight marginalization. Rule of law and fight against corruption play a huge role as well.

I trust the Secretary-General to be both visionary and concrete when setting the scene for the intergovernmental negotiations. This process will culminate next year in this very hall. The best way to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the United Nations next year is to adopt transformative commitments that set us on a path towards sustainable development.

Mr. President,

I started by describing the grim state of international relations. My analysis is not an excuse for inaction, but a call to redouble our diplomatic efforts. We must act with determination and we must act now. Finland will support efforts to restore peace and prevent further damage to our rule-based international system. We must also aim high – in addressing together the broader global challenges of climate change and sustainable development.

Thank you!