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Statement by

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

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Mr. President, Secretary-General, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the 72nd session of the General Assembly.  
Finland fully supports your six priorities and we appreciate the selection of *"People"* as your mandate's centrepiece.

Let me also extend my heartfelt congratulations to Secretary-General António Guterres. Your determination in reforming the United Nations is laudable. Transparency, accountability, efficiency and gender balance should be the guiding principles of the UN System.

I also welcome your focus on conflict prevention.  
Successful conflict prevention saves lives and financial resources.

Finland continues to advocate the use of mediation in conflict resolution. Mediation efforts, when successful, prevent conflicts and decrease human suffering.

Those who are marginalized must be given a voice in peace processes. Women, children and adolescents often pay the highest price in conflicts but they can also help to pave a way out of the crisis.

Finland has contributed to the establishment of a Nordic network of women mediators. It aims at sustaining peace through the inclusive and meaningful participation of women in all phases of peace processes.

Peacekeeping and Special Political Missions are at the core of the UN's mandate. Having experience of UN operations since 1955, Finland supports the Secretary General in reforming and making UN peacekeeping more effective.

Following our pledge made in 2015, Finland has significantly increased its participation in the United Nations police missions.  
Finnish police officers, including a specialized team on sexual and gender based violence in UNMISS, are now deployed in seven UN operations.

It is my strong view that no UN peacekeeper nor any other UN personnel should be associated with misconduct of any shape or form.  
In particular, there must be zero tolerance with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse. The Secretary General's initiative on a Circle of Leadership is timely and welcome.

Mr. President,  
In wars, there are no winners. Yet the conflicts continue. In 2016, 157 000 lives were lost in violent conflicts globally. There are almost 68 million refugees in the world today. The conflicts in the Middle East, Africa and Eastern Ukraine are all examples of untold human suffering. But they are not the only ones.  
The international community has not succeeded in maintaining peace and security.

The grave situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is an urgent concern. The North Korean nuclear weapons programme is a threat to global peace and stability, and it must be stopped. The United Nations Security Council's co-operation on North Korea has been successful. It is important that unity prevails.

At the same time we have seen continued provocations by North Korea. Such behaviour cannot be tolerated by the international community. Finland, as part of the European Union, stands firmly behind the sanctions and calls on others to do the same. A solution can only be sought through negotiations to which the North Korean government must participate without preconditions.

Nuclear weapons represent a severe threat to mankind. As long as nuclear weapons exist there is a risk of a catastrophe. The NPT remains the cornerstone of global non-proliferation and the foundation for nuclear disarmament.

Finland's approach to nuclear disarmament is result-oriented and pragmatic. It is imperative that the countries possessing nuclear weapons are on board on any negotiations. I call on all nuclear weapon states and countries possessing these weapons to promptly take concrete actions in nuclear disarmament. It is important that the nuclear deal on Iran is honoured by all parties. I also welcome the recent talks on strategic stability between the United States and Russia. It is our hope that they will restart the arms control talks in Europe and globally.

Mr. President,

We must pay closer attention also to other threats. Let me take two examples: Firstly, countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism is a shared priority. As a global body the United Nations is well-placed in the fight against terrorism. I am looking forward to the leadership by the new UN Office of Counter-Terrorism.

Secondly, we must take health security more seriously. Diseases travel across borders rapidly and synthetic biology is an emerging threat. Better prevention and national preparedness is called for. We need global multi-partner collaboration. Finland and Australia are co-chairing an Alliance, which supports health security capacity building. We need to take action before the next pandemic arrives.

Mr. President,

Population dynamics are of great importance. Even though the most rapid phase of global population growth is receding, in many places populations are still growing. This is particularly the case in some African countries where potentially a four-fold increase by the end of the century can take place.

Growing populations often result in rapid urbanisation. Cities offer people many possibilities, and the positive potential of urbanisation is huge. But, if mismanaged, urbanisation can also increase rootlessness, hopelessness, even radicalisation.

One antidote is to ensure that every individual can reach their potential. Economic opportunities and human rights are vital. People must have a positive stake in their own societies. This will require dedicated efforts at empowering individuals, including access to education and basic services.

Gender equality is a key priority in the Finnish foreign policy. As a HeForShe IMPACT Champion I attach also high personal importance to this. Universal access to sexual and reproductive health, rights and comprehensive sexuality education is a key factor in sustainable development.

Gender equality and high-quality education as well as work for Agenda 2030 are also Finland's priorities as a candidate for the Executive Board of UNESCO.

Mr. President,  
Climate change binds together the south and the north. Over time none of us will be spared from its destructive effects. Besides direct environmental impacts it affects security and results in forced migration.

The rapid implementation of the Paris agreement is even more urgent than a year ago. The Agreement has a clear goal: limiting the temperature rise well below two degrees.

We are not on that path currently. We have to speed up our efforts – the window to act is closing. The energy transition from fossil fuels to renewables and energy efficiency has to be much faster than we see today. Everyone's effort is needed.

The Arctic is at the forefront of climate change. It is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world. If we lose the Arctic, we will lose the whole world. We need to find effective ways to slow down the warming of the Arctic.

One way would be to reduce emissions and impacts of black carbon and methane in the Arctic. The sources of black carbon are known and technological solutions exist. What we need is a common will and determined steps to deal with this issue.

These emissions should be reduced first and foremost in the Arctic. But also global action is needed, as a great deal of the black carbon is transported from outside the area. I firmly believe that tackling this issue is a genuine win-win for the whole humanity. Finland is currently chairing the Arctic Council and combatting climate change is one of our priorities.

Mr. President,  
Finland celebrates 100 years of independence this year. The theme of our Centennial is "Together".  
Since the beginning of our independence, Finland has supported and respected the rules-based international order.

In our interconnected world the promotion of the national interest requires also international efforts. I strongly believe that global challenges and threats must be addressed together by the world community, not only by individual action.

Peace and security, human rights and development belong to all of us.  
Only together can we make this world a better place.

Thank you!