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STATEMENT BY

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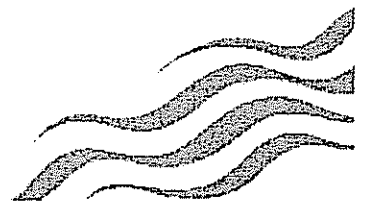
Finland

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Madame Chair,
Your Excellencies,
Colleagues, Dear Friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to congratulate you, Madame Chair, and the other members of the Bureau. It is a great pleasure to address this 47th session of the Commission on Social Development and present the Finnish point of view on social integration. Finland furthermore associates itself fully with the statement made earlier on behalf of the European Union by the distinguished representative of the Czech Republic.

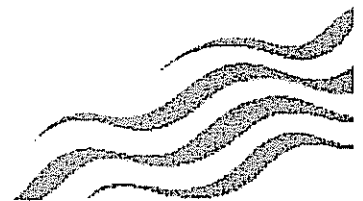
Changes within societies are more and more dependent on globalisation, climate change, ageing population and strong technological development. Unfortunately, too many of us are living under conflict and war conditions. However, the decisions of political leaders influence these phenomena and it is extremely important to tackle these issues together.

Globalisation and, in particular, global economic integration create immense opportunities for those with skills, knowledge and economic resources. The financial crisis brings about uncertainty and misfortune and we need to bear in mind that crises hit hardest on those who are in the most vulnerable position.

The states have the responsibility to ensure access to well-functioning and sustainable social protection on equal grounds. This is necessary in order to create and maintain social cohesion and the significance is highlighted in crisis situations. Well-functioning social protection, including social and health services and income security, helps people to cope with crises.

I am convinced that a strong welfare society, which is based on democratic values, respect for human rights and comprehensive social protection, employment and education, can prevent and alleviate the negative effects of globalisation and phenomena such as the current financial crisis.

Ladies and Gentlemen,



Finland is committed to the promotion of sustainable development and strives for a Society for All. The goal of our current policy is to create a society in which the main goals are to promote people's participation in society, equality, and possibility to lead an independent life.

Achieving these objectives requires innovations, actions and strong political leadership. The global financial crisis has started an intensive seeking for solutions how to stimulate national economies. My suggestion is to keep high on the priority list all actions aiming to build up and develop an accessible and sustainable society.

Poverty and exclusion are a growing challenge in all societies – both those with high and those with low income levels. Social integration – with its key elements of decent work and inclusive education – plays a crucial role in the prevention of poverty.

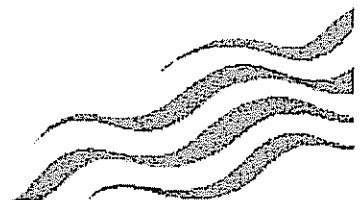
We must commit ourselves to working together despite the different manifestations of poverty around the world. It is alarming that income and health gaps are growing nationally and worldwide.

We need to cut this trend and in order to break the cycle of poverty it is necessary to solve the problem of child poverty, which was already highlighted in our Millennium Goals. It is also an important item on the EU agenda for the European Year 2010 for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

The promotion of social integration requires that we work in all policy fields and assess the impact of our policy decisions on the everyday life, health, and wellbeing of people. We need cooperation between our governments in order to control global phenomena. But we must not forget that people live their lives in their communities where the citizens themselves and their organisations play key roles for social integration.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The recent Nobel Peace Prize winner Martti Ahtisaari said that peace is a question of will. Reinforcing social integration is, likewise, a question of will, and we should commit ourselves to it. We also need solidarity. Reinforcing social integration requires national, regional and global solidarity in order to make our world more just and equitable.



We political leaders have the will to make the world a place where each and everyone's life has an equal value irrespective of, inter alia gender, age, disability, ethnic background and religion. We in Finland want to commit ourselves to this goal.

Last but not least, social cohesion and integration have always been the strength of our society, part of our concept of comprehensive security. With this in mind we also seek – as all of you know – the membership of the Security Council for the years 2013 and 2014.

Thank you for your attention.

