

**CSW Multi-Stakeholder Forum
25 January 2018**

**Panel 3: Ensuring access to healthcare and sexual and reproductive health and rights,
and to infrastructure, water and sanitation**

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Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to take part in this Multi-Stakeholder Forum in preparation for CSW. This is an important opportunity for different actors to come together to discuss the topics related to the priority theme of CSW62.

Firstly, I would like to thank in advance the other panellists for their insights into this important topic. Our discussions here today provide a fruitful starting point for the discussions that we will continue during CSW.

In my intervention, I will concentrate on the work Finland has done globally in order to promote health services, sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as rights to water and sanitation in rural areas.

Improving access to health services is a priority for Finnish development cooperation, and we have implemented a number of projects in our partner countries including Nepal, Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania.

In Afghanistan we have worked to improve maternal health and sexual and reproductive health services with very good results. Through the provision of sexual and reproductive health services we made sure that 41,000 women did not have to go through unsafe and dangerous abortions.

Another project I want to highlight is our work on improving health in Somalia with IOM. The project improved the capacity of public sector health and education institutions to provide quality services with special focus on groups in vulnerable situations, such as women, children and youth, through skills and knowledge transfer by the Somali diaspora. The overall objective of the project is to contribute to stabilization in South Central Somalia through increasing access to basic services, especially health services and education, and creating employment opportunities for the youth.

With regard to sexual and reproductive health and rights, I would like to highlight the SheDecides movement as an innovative partnership to ensure universal access to SRHR. SheDecides is a global movement to promote, provide, protect and enhance the fundamental rights of every girl and woman. SheDecides aims to build a broad, inclusive social movement and to mobilise public, political, and financial support to ensure women's and girls' full access to sexual and reproductive health and rights worldwide. Finland is currently the lead Champion of the movement together with South Africa and

MexFam. Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Kai Mykkänen is deeply committed to promoting the goals of the movement.

Right to health is closely linked to the rights to water and sanitation. In our view, taking a holistic and comprehensive approach to the gender sensitive management of natural resources is key in ensuring sustainable access to safe and reliable water and sanitation. In developing countries, at household and community levels women are often still the main providers of food, water and energy, this being especially true in rural settings. This makes women vulnerable to the changes in their livelihoods with regards to natural resources, especially during and after conflicts. On the other hand, in conflict situations women may assume new roles in natural resources management. These roles can both serve peacebuilding efforts and support women's political and economic empowerment and participation. Since 2013, Finland has been working with IUCN to address and support natural resource management practices that take into account gender equality and strengthen especially women's position.

Finally, I would like to talk a bit about our aims in CSW62. We hope to see strong and concrete language in the Agreed Conclusions on enhancing women's political participation. Promoting the active, equal, free, effective, meaningful and informed participation of rural women and girls and their organisations in political and public life is essential at all levels of decision-making. The practical barriers to rural women's and girls' participation and gender stereotypes need to be addressed. We need to raise awareness about the importance of the participation of women and girls in community decision-making, as well as promote the participation of women and women's organisations in peace negotiations and conflict prevention in rural contexts. I would especially like to emphasize the need to support the active and meaningful participation of indigenous women and women living with disabilities in this regard.

Finland continues to engage with the UN, its member states and the civil society in order to promote these important issues both at the political and the grassroots level.

Thank you.