



PERMANENT MISSION OF FINLAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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Commission on the Status of Women

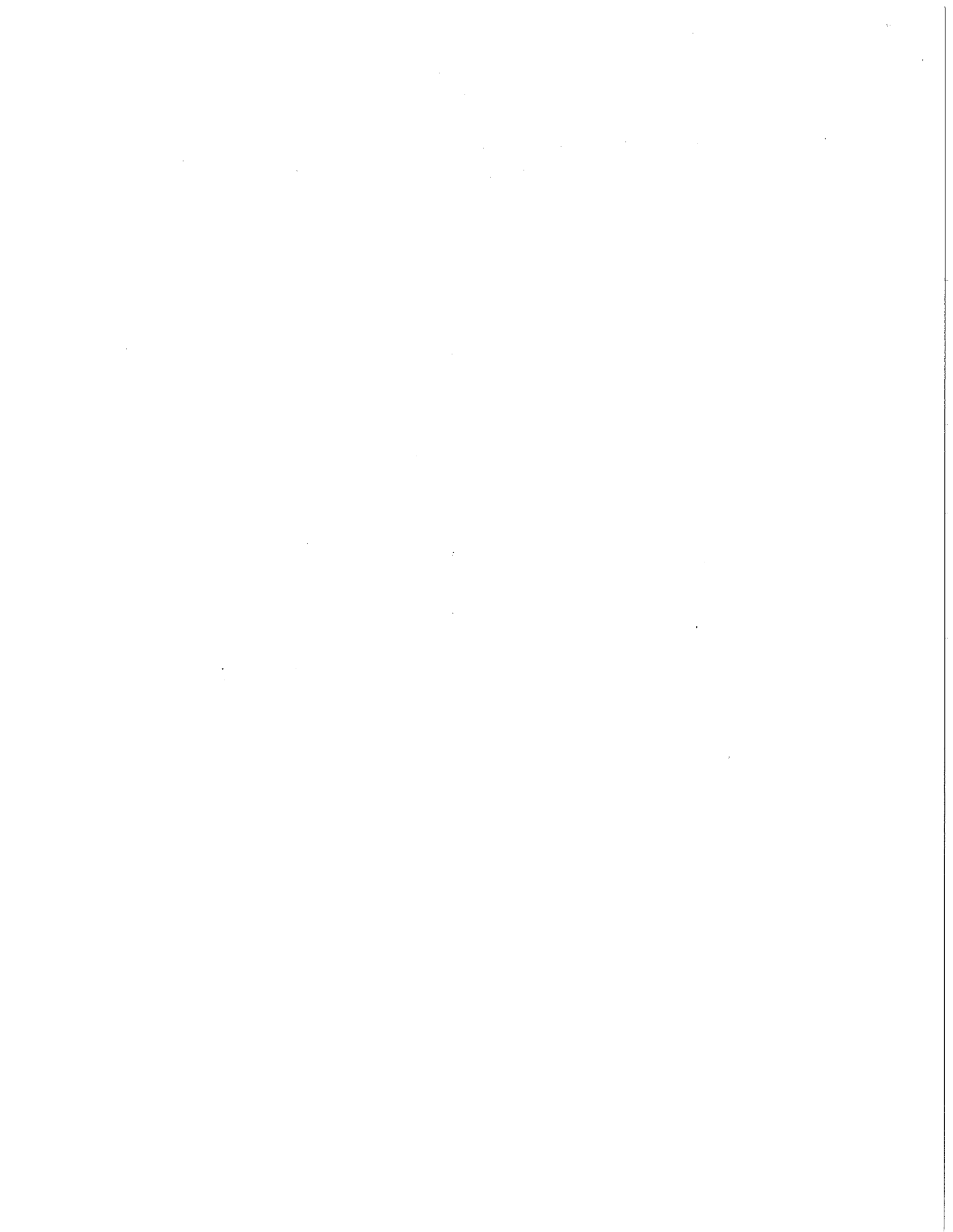
Fifty-seventh session

Statement by

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Minister for Gender Equality Affairs of Finland

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Madam Chairperson, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finland aligns herself with the statement made by the European Union.

The promotion of human rights is a central part of the Finnish Government's foreign and security policy. We have placed the human rights of women as one of our priorities.

While human rights and in particular the rights of women hold a central place in our political decision making processes, **the issue of violence against women and girls is unfortunately not unfamiliar to Finland.**

The challenges we face have been noted internationally. Finland has received recommendations from several human rights mechanisms. Due to the pressing need to eliminate violence against women, Finland is taking a strong stand today, at the 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women. We wish to work together with you to achieve a very precious goal – **elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls.**

As one of the most crucial aspects of violence against women and girls, Finland promotes sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls both in bilateral and multilateral fora. This issue is a clear priority topic for Finland during this year's CSW, and we urge all Member States to work with us to reach the best attainable outcome to promote both reproductive AND sexual rights of women and girls.

Finland places strong emphasis on **the role of civil society.** Societal changes stem from civil society, and NGOs, especially women's organizations, have a vital role in combating violence against women and girls. Civil society often has access to first-hand information

and experience of the situation at the grassroots level. Civil society actors are thus crucial partners in our efforts both at the national and international levels.

Real change is possible only if all members of the community and the society at large are committed. Therefore, **the important role of men and boys** cannot be forgotten. Engaging men and boys in efforts to end violence against women and girls is necessary. Therefore, awareness-raising and education are key to identifying the problems and initiating change.

Prevention, protection and prosecution are the three elements at the core of the elimination of violence against women and girls. The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, the Istanbul Convention, is built on these three principles, and it was opened for signature on 11 May 2011.

Finland was among the very first signatories of the Istanbul Convention, and is strongly committed to its ratification. By concluding the Convention, the Council of Europe and the signatories have reached, for the first time in Europe, a set of legally binding standards to prevent violence against women and domestic violence, to protect its victims and prosecute and punish the perpetrators.

At the national level, the Finnish Government has adopted a five-year Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women. Its aim is to tackle violence proactively and holistically by seeking to influence attitudes and behavior. The Action Plan lists the goals and concrete actions to reduce violence against women, among which **preventive actions play a key role**. The Action Plan also aims at improving the services and support offered to victims, as well as increasing the cooperation between and knowledge among various

authorities, service providers, professionals and the civil society. Piecemeal efforts are not sufficient. **We need a multisectoral, holistic, and well-coordinated response** to take on these challenges.

Violence against women occurs in developed and developing countries alike. In conflicts women and girls often bear the heaviest burden and are subjected to violence, such as murder, rape, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy and forced sterilization. However, they should not only be seen as victims but as essential contributors during the transition from conflict to peace. **Finland is committed to the full implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on women, peace and security. Our second National Action Plan to implement Security Council resolution 1325 was adopted last year.** Finland supports Afghanistan, Kenya and Nepal in the development and implementation of their national action plans through twinning programmes.

At the international level, the UN has a key role in questions related to gender equality and the promotion of women's rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women being one very important example of this work. In the UN context Finland has led the efforts to strengthen women's access to justice and paid particular attention to the issue of reparations. Combating violence against women is also one of the priorities of UN Women. Finland actively supports the work of UN Women under the able leadership of Madame Bachelet.

Also within the CSW framework, it is our joint responsibility to work for concrete results in reducing and ending all forms of violence against women.

Thank you.

