

Delegation from the Republic of Finland
Position Paper for the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

In the year 2019 the autonomy and equality of women is still a faraway objective. The fulfilment of number five of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) *Gender equality* requires joined collaboration and immediate action. Therefore, Finland highly appreciates the adoption of these topics to the agenda in the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). Finland as a top government partner and a key ally of UN Women since the beginning is looking forward to discuss the following two topics: Eliminating Child, Early, and Forced Marriage by 2030 and Supporting the Involvement of Women in Governance and Decision-Making.

I. Eliminating Child, Early, and Forced Marriage by 2030

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage (CEFM) does not just violate the fundamental Human Rights, as Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it also induces serious consequences. The interruption of basic education and the higher risk of early pregnancy cause severe disadvantages often ending in social isolation and narrowed career opportunities. Domestic violence is another threat which, as all other intimidations, concerns girls in the first place. According to recent statistics of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Sub-Saharan Africa is still the region with the highest rate of child marriages as there are 40% of the women married before the age of 18, followed by South Asia (30%). 15% of all marriages in those regions are even enforced on children under the age of 15. Regarding absolute numbers, India, Bangladesh and Nigeria are the countries with the most child marriages. In the past, UN-Women has initiated various programs to address CEFM as *Join us in ending child marriage* a collaboration with UNICEF in 2017.

Finland has been a leader on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and strongly supports the international compliance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) (1995). Moreover, Finland contributes to various humanitarian programmes of the UN including the support of National Action Plans (NAPs) on UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in Lebanon, Tunisia, Iraq and Jordan. By assisting in the implementation process of the NAPs the consideration of the women's needs can be ensured. Finland stresses the significance of the General Assembly resolution 73/153 (2018), which contains the awareness, that families, communities, religions and traditions play a decisive role in the challenge of diminishing CEFM.

Finland proposes a strategic educational initiative named *Education for Self-Reliance Approach (ESRA)*. To enable a world where women possess equal autonomy as men a combination of protection and education is a promising strategy. Many women are just unaware of their rights and need confidence in telling their opinion. In order to address the roots of the problem, the issue of reproducing backward patterns, a collaboration of various actors including UN-Women, UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme is inevitable. Additionally, an assistance for governments in prohibiting CEFM is required. Moreover, Finland strongly supports the idea of making the problems and impacts of CEFM more public and reminding of the good intentions of the BPFA. For the upcoming 25th anniversary of the BPFA, a strong campaign for the urgent stop of CEFM can obtain an extensive sympathy.

II. Supporting the Involvement of Women in Governance and Decision-Making

According to recent numbers of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) the percentage of female government members worldwide is 24,5%. Not a single UN Member State has achieved gender equality in politics. This has severe consequences, because an adequate political involvement of women is a precondition for the equal representation of women's rights and needs. Whereas Nordic countries perform quite well with a percentage of 44% the IPU states the immediate need of progress in the Middle East and North Africa as they have only a share of 16,8%. Although 189 Member States committed their selves in the BPFA to remove all obstacles for women in all parts of life, female discrimination is still a challenging issue nowadays.

In 1906 Finland became the first European country which granted women the right to vote and to be elected. This has been the starting point of a path towards comprehensive women's rights. Next to the establishment of respective governmental structures, such as a Council for Gender Equality in 1972, Finland adopted the principle of gender equality to its legislation in 1995. Since then, there exists a gender quota of 40% for all governmental bodies except the municipal councils. Additionally, in 2005, awareness-raising activities were introduced for the Members of the Parliament. According to the Global Gender Gap Report Finland has been the 3rd most gender-equal country in the world in 2018. Besides, Finland successfully promoted women empowerment to its neighbouring areas with the objective of increasing welfare and social stability in the region. Recently, Finland signed a cooperation agreement with UN-Women Afghanistan to advance women's empowerment. The program includes collaboration with the government as well as the civil society and is scheduled until 2022.

Finland proposes a two-way initiative called *OP-PA* which stands for *Opportunities and Practical Assistance*. Firstly, the political processes must be modified in a way, which allows and encourages women to participate in politics. Women all around the world need better opportunities to let their voices be heard. The required measures differ between the global north and the global south and range from legal amendments regarding basic women rights until female quota and equal incomes. Secondly, the empowerment of women must be further strengthened. Finland proposes to enlarge concrete practical assistance of women in advance of elections. Similar as 2015 in Tanzania, female candidates must be supported regarding their speaking and campaigning as well as their leadership skills. Finland collaborated with this project with UN-Women Tanzania and proposes to enlarge this type of direct help within the International Community. Moreover, continuous lobbying for women in leading positions is inevitable. The acknowledgment of women needs strong campaigning and awareness assistance.