



svomenykrliitto

Speech by Jutta Urpilainen, Chairperson, the UN Association of Finland

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Meeting with the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Your Excellency, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations – to Finland and to this meeting with civil society. I wish you warmly welcome, Mr Ban Ki-moon. -- Ja hyvää huomenta - Hyun dai.

It is also my pleasure to welcome the Finnish civil society representatives here today. After all, it was “we the peoples” who created this world organisation - to promote peace, development and human rights. These three are closely connected.

In addition to Millennium Development Goals, the connection between security, development and human rights was the major innovation of the Millennium Declaration adopted nine years ago.

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We are living in the middle of financial crises, economic crises, climate crises as well as food crises. This sense of urgency creates a political momentum to tackle the most serious problems of our times: poverty, climate change and nuclear weapons.

This is our world.

We are the people concerned.

We need to take the responsibility for our actions for the sake of our children.

In today’s event, we want to address women rights, youth participation, minority rights as well as climate change and peace. We have Finnish civil society experts to speak on these issues.

In my opening remarks, I would like to say a few words on climate change, civil society participation and the UN reform.

(Quote) “The science is clear. Climate change is happening. The impact is real. The time to act is now. Let us turn the climate crisis into a climate compact.” (Unquote) This is what you Mr. Secretary General said in Bali in December.

Your call for “a green new deal” represents the leadership we need today. On behalf of all of us, I would like to thank you Mr. Secretary General for your courage and vision in this respect.

I truly believe that we need to tackle economic crises and climate crises at the same time. This is the challenge for the European Union, but it is also the mission for the whole UN.



In addition to Copenhagen agreement, we need investments to clean energy and clean technology. We need these investments in Europe and globally - in order to create a silver bullet hitting the both targets – both economic crises and climate crises.

But how do we get there?

Looking forward - sometimes means - looking backward. In this case, I mean looking back to the Brundtland Commission on sustainable development in the 1980's. The work of the Commission helped to build foundation for the debate on environment and economic development.

The topic of the high-level event of the next General Assembly is climate change. This is an opportunity to set an ambitious agenda in order to develop a strategy for smart green growth – or in other words, Green New Deal.

As a tool in this work, one might consider establishing a new Commission on Sustainable Development during the upcoming high-level event. We leave this idea for your consideration, Mr Secretary-General.

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What is it - that we can do for the UN - as members of civil society?

We can state our concerns with a voice that is loud and clear. We need to say that too many conflicts have taken place, more need to be prevented. Too many children are living in poverty, more need to be saved. Too many women and men are oppressed, more needs to be done for human rights.

People are motivated by participation and success. There are a lot of good examples of civil society participation in international affairs. In the 1990's civil society had a strong role in thematic world conferences. The work and support of civil society made – for example the mine ban treaties – a reality.

For the civil society to be strong and effective, it requires strong members and democratic participation to define the mandate. The World Federation of UN Associations - and civil society at large - need strong members. The voice of our Southern colleagues needs to be stronger.

In this regard, there is a need for a Civil Society Fund, not only to increase the participation of our Southern colleagues, but also to support the development of common working mechanisms for the civil society as a whole. There are still silent voices that remain to be heard, in Finland and internationally.

This idea of the UN civil society fund is not a new one. I believe, however, that this initiative deserves your attention, Mr Secretary-General.

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Finally, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, let me say a few words on reforming the United Nations. The 2005 High-level Meeting of the UN General Assembly, the World Summit, agreed on many important reforms.

In addition to Security Council reform, I would like to mention three of them: gender architecture, responsibility to protect as well as non-proliferation. Promoting gender awareness across the entire UN system is important. When it comes to use of force in humanitarian crisis, I also believe we can move forward on responsibility to protect through inclusive debate among member states.

Unless we make clear progress - globally - towards better arms control and abolishing nuclear weapons, we can expect more nuclear tests. In this regard, president Obama's commitment to a world - free from nuclear weapons - is more than welcome.

On prevention of nuclear weapons, North Korea has seriously endangered the progress. The UN needs to work for a quick restoration of the six party negotiations. We need, indeed, to prevent - further testing and development - of nuclear weapons.

Your Excellency Mr. Secretary-General, ladies and gentlemen, I kindly thank you for your attention. Kiitoksia – Kamsa-Hamnida.

With these words, let me once again wish you all welcome to this meeting.