



Finland to the UN Security Council in 2013–2014

STATEMENT BY

H.E. Mr. Sauli Niinistö

President of the Republic of Finland

on the occasion of

the 67th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

United Nations, New York

25 September 2012

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Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, upon your election as President of the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly. Let me assure you that Finland is fully behind you when you fulfill your important duties. We look forward to close cooperation with you.

I have the pleasure and honour to address the General Assembly for the first time as President of the Republic of Finland. The United Nations is the forum to which our peoples' expectations are directed, when challenges that affect us all need to be addressed. We in this hall must recognize our responsibilities. We all must be ready to shoulder them.

A profound change is sweeping over our globe. Rapid economic growth in the countries of the global South has already made greater wellbeing for hundreds of millions of people a reality. More people have a chance to lift themselves out of poverty. More people have a chance for political participation. These developments will make our world more just and less prone to conflict. This is in Finland's interest. This is in the interests of us all.

At the same time, the tectonic plates of economic power are shifting. Global instruments are needed to manage that shift. The UN and the various G Groups need to work better together. We recognize that the G Groups have an important role to play in making the UN a more dynamic and relevant player in the world economy.

Finland sees itself as a responsible member of the international community, as a good global citizen, if you will. We support the United Nations in word and in deed because it is in our national interest to do so.

The UN is a genuinely universal forum for cooperation. It has unique legitimacy. For us, it is an indispensable means to promote international peace and security, development and human rights. As a small country – and there are only some five million of us Finns – a world order based on respect for the UN Charter and international law is a must. It is not an option.

Finland is a candidate for a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the term 2013-2014. We wish to shoulder the responsibility that membership in the Council entails. We believe that we could make a contribution. Finland would approach issues on the Council's agenda as an engaged member state. We would be ready to look for constructive and even-handed solutions to common problems. We believe that as a small and militarily non-allied member state we have got what it takes.

Finland's candidacy enjoys the full support of the other Nordic countries – Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. All the Nordic countries share a strong commitment to the UN and its activities. We are all committed and active multilateralists.

The ability to prevent conflict around the world remains the UN's core mission. It is the yardstick by which the UN's successes – or failures – are measured. It is the Security Council that shoulders the main responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Peace-keeping mandated by the Council is an important means at our disposal in this regard. Finland has participated in UN peace-keeping as long as it has been a member state. The first Finnish peace-keepers were dispatched to the first UN mission, on the Suez in 1956. Since then some 50 000 Finnish peace-keepers – almost one in a hundred Finnish men and women – have served on missions around the world. We are fully committed to continue our contribution. We are also ready to share with other member states and regional

organizations the expertise we have gained with respect to training peace-keepers. Our training centre, FINCENT, is at your service.

Peace-keeping is indispensable but it is not enough. Soldiers are needed to secure the conditions where peace begins to be built. In the end, peace is built by civilians. That is why Finland has long paid special attention to civilian crisis management. Finnish experts – police officers, experts at the rule of law, gender equality and human rights – participate in peace-keeping operations in many parts of the world.

Effective mediation is also a must. Finland has made a strong contribution to mediating conflicts.

My esteemed predecessor, President Martti Ahtisaari, won a Nobel Peace Prize for his decades-long career as a successful mediator. At the initiative of Finland and Turkey, a resolution was adopted in this hall last year that strengthened the normative basis for mediation. I am glad that the Secretary-General will soon make his guidelines on mediation available to all member states, regional organisations and other actors. I encourage him to make full use of the powers that the Charter grants him in this regard.

Respect for the rule of law is part and parcel of building peace in post-conflict societies. Impunity often leaves behind the germs of another conflict. In the long run, economic development is sustainable only if the rule of law is respected. It is encouraging that the high-level session on the rule of law yesterday showed that there is indeed political commitment to further such efforts.

Respect for the rule of law instructs us to honor the beliefs of others but it also requires us to condemn all violence. Finland together with the other Nordic countries will again introduce at the General Assembly a resolution on protection of diplomatic missions. Upholding the diplomatic rights and immunities is in our common interest.

Poverty reduction is the ultimate means to secure the peace in many parts of the world. That requires, above all, economic growth and a level playing field for all. Development cooperation can assist, especially in the least developed countries. Those countries that already suffer the effects of climate change are particularly vulnerable and in need of our support. Finland has a record, stretching over half a century, of being a reliable partner for developing countries. Despite well-known budgetary pressures within the eurozone, Finland has increased its outlays for development cooperation over the past years to an annual level of about 1.5 billion US dollars.

Weapons of mass destruction remain an existential threat to international peace and security. Finland has been a strong supporter of the Non-proliferation Treaty right from the beginning. Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, disarmament and the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy are all necessary parts of the whole.

Finland is prepared to host a Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free from nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction this year. The task has been described as difficult but rest assured, we will do our utmost to fulfill it.

Nuclear material cannot be allowed to fall into the wrong hands. Finland is on track to fulfill the commitments we undertook at the Washington conference in 2010. National measures and international cooperation are both needed to stop nuclear terrorism. As a user of peaceful nuclear energy, Finland is strongly committed to continue the process.

Chemical weapons were banned totally some years ago. The treaty is not yet universal, though. The Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, VERIFIN, is an established and respected institution. Should the need arise in the Middle East, Finland is ready to put its expertise at the disposal of the international community.

Conventional weapons trade clearly needs better global regulation. It is regrettable that the negotiations on an Arms Trade Treaty ended without the desired outcome. The goal is in sight, however. It is important that the process continues within the UN context. As one of the co-sponsors, Finland continues to reach out for a substantive and as nearly universal treaty as possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In Libya the UN was instrumental in laying the groundwork for a new and hopeful future for its people.

In Syria the tragic situation is, if anything, getting worse. The Security Council has not been able to take the leading role that it is expected to take under the Charter with respect to threats to the peace such as this. The General Assembly has, on the other hand, sent a strong signal that the international community cannot remain indifferent. Killings of civilians must stop. All members of the Security Council must cooperate to find a way out of the crisis. The authority of the UN will suffer if the efforts to end the crisis will move elsewhere.

The Syrian conflict has overshadowed the Middle East peace process. This is something that the parties and the international community can ill afford. A two-state solution, within which an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian state lives in peace and security with the State of Israel, is slipping out of reach. The Palestinians have waited patiently. The negotiations must restart. That is the only way. Renewed negotiations need to result in a sustainable solution that leads to the establishment of a Palestinian state while respecting Israel's legitimate security concerns. Settlements are squarely a contravention of international law and a growing obstacle to peace.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The UN Security Council has power but with power goes responsibility. I hope that in a few weeks, at an election held right here in this hall, Finland is entrusted by fellow member states with this power and its attendant responsibility for two years.

Finland will act in the Council in accordance with the UN Charter and on the basis of our values. We will work constructively and pragmatically, in order to maintain and strengthen international peace and security to the best of our ability.

Thank you!