



**PERMANENT MISSION OF FINLAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS**  
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**STATEMENT BY**

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**Commission on the Status of Women**  
**53<sup>rd</sup> Session**  
**Continuation of the General Discussion**

**United Nations, New York**

**4 March, 2009**

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## THE EQUAL SHARING OF RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN, INCLUDING CAREGIVING IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV/AIDS

Finland associates itself fully with the statement made earlier on behalf of the European Union by the distinguished representative of the Czech Republic.

Mr./Madam Chairperson,

Promoting the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men requires changes in the structures and practices of work and political decision-making as well as in the sharing of family responsibilities. The active role of men and boys in these transformations is of crucial importance.

Let me start by presenting a few developments from my own country, Finland. Nearly 70 % of women with children under seven years are working mothers. This has not been possible without the extensive paid family leave system and universal day care services. Furthermore, Finnish women have a long tradition of political participation: currently, women represent 42 % of MPs and 60 % of the members of government.

In Finland, most of the parental leaves are still taken by women. This has negative repercussions on women's labour market position and women's wages. Our challenge is to encourage fathers to take more time off to care for their children. By using their right to take parental leave, men will have major responsibility for the care of their children. In the long run, these kinds of transformations in the role of men will have substantial impact on the ways in which we organise our politics, work and family life. Improving reconciliation of work and family is one of the priorities of the current Government Action Plan for Gender Equality, adopted in July 2008. The specific objective in this area is to encourage men to take parental leaves.

Something also has to be said about the current global financial situation;

Crisis effects on women and children, if ignored, will both increase current poverty and imperil future development. Well-designed policy responses that highlight women's roles as economic agents can go a long way towards mitigating the negative effects of the crisis. Empirical evidence of the impacts of financial crises on women and families is, however, limited, with considerable heterogeneity, depending for example on the development level and specific economic structure of each country. Further analysis on the impacts of the financial crisis on women is needed.

Mr./Madam Chairperson,

There are certain areas of particular concern to us that require continued advocacy and strengthened support, namely; by reducing vulnerability of girls and women to the HIV epidemic and by strengthening the capacity of health systems to provide confidential and voluntary counselling, testing, treatment and care as part of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services. In this regard it is important to develop efficient and direct social protection programmes for low income households to strengthen family mechanisms of caregiving and support

The face of the caregiver in the context of HIV/AIDS is most often a woman's face. The role of the caregiver is crucial not only in nursing the chronically ill, but also in the long term mitigation of the most devastating impacts of HIV/AIDS - the orphaning of children. HIV is mostly contracted through sexual transmission. Yet, the vast majority of children living with HIV have been infected by their mother. Preventing mother to child transmission of HIV should therefore be a top priority.

Prevention, must be supported on a long term basis through adequate attention to strengthening reproductive health services. As the number of orphans and vulnerable children increase, even greater burden is put on the family and the community, including on older female caregivers.

Mr./Madam Chairperson,

The strengthening of the UN work on gender equality and women empowerment continues to be a high priority of Finland. I would like to express Finland's strong support for the establishment of a new gender entity that would be a central driver in the UN system for gender issues and that would strengthen and improve the work in the field related to gender. In this regard, Finland is looking forward to the forthcoming Secretary-General's report on UN's gender architecture.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to state our firm intention to continue working for gender-equality and women's rights in the Security Council, as we are seeking membership in the council for the years 2013-14.

Thank you Mr/Mrs. Chairperson