Mr Chairman,

Fulfillment of human rights for women is an imperative as such, as well as it is a prerequisite for achieving peace and security, development and well-being for all. It is a cornerstone for social and economic sustainability. Women and men must have equal rights and opportunities in all fields of life.

The gravest injustice faced by women is being denied their rights at international, regional, national or local level just because of their sex and gender. We need to acknowledge that recognizing women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights as human rights is vital in achieving gender equality. Women must have control over their bodies and their lives.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is the most important international normative vehicle for improving the lives of women. Finland remains strongly committed to the implementation of the Convention and supports the work of its independent and impartial monitoring body, the CEDAW Committee. General comments adopted by the Committee provide new perspectives on the implementation of the Convention, in order to respond to challenges of today. Furthermore, we would like to emphasize the importance of the Optional Protocol to the Convention which provides a unique gender-specific international complaints procedure. It has vast potential to enforce compliance with treaty obligations and to significantly enhance the realization of women’s rights by providing more effective domestic remedies.

Women’s equal access to justice is not only crucial for the realization of their equal human rights but it is also a relevant development concern. Problems related to women’s inheritance rights, land rights, and lacking access to birth registration hinder women’s opportunities and keep them in poverty. Women need to have access to decent and paid work and access to education, health and other services. Too often impunity prevails when women’s human rights are violated. This has to stop.

The Security Council resolution 1325 addresses participation, protection and prevention in the issues of women, peace and security, including gender-based violence in conflicts. Finland supports and promotes the comprehensive and balanced implementation of Security Council resolution and the five other resolutions related to it. Over 40 countries have national action plans - Finland being one of them - but more is clearly needed. National action plans present a good example on how the resolution is being put into practice. The efforts made to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations through the mandates of operations and training of both leadership and personnel in the operations is another good example. Most importantly, however, we must see women as active participants in peace and security, not only as victims of conflict.

We also need to increase women’s participating in peace processes and mediation. Lack of women’s participation is truly alarming and detrimental to peace and security. Therefore, Finland commends the Secretary General for appointing Mary Robinson as his Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region of Africa. Women's participation is very important in preventing the recurrence of conflicts and it makes peace more lasting and durable. Therefore we should have
more women both as high-level mediators but also in negotiating teams of conflicting parties. Finland continues to be active in promoting mediation and in bolstering its support structures at global and regional levels. The UN Group of Friends of Mediation that Finland initiated with Turkey now consists of 37 member states and 8 international organizations and it may play a key role in mobilizing support for women’s participation in peace processes and mediation.

UN Women was created just three years ago to accelerate the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment. Finland has given its full political support to UN Women from its very onset. Its three functions, normative, coordinating and operational are all equally valuable and worthy of support. Gender equality and women’s empowerment are issues that do not take place by chance. They need to be planned and invested in, especially financially. This is why Finland has pledged to double its core funding to UN Women to over 18 million dollars next year. We have encouraged other nations to follow us. Future development of contributions from the UN regular budget to the UN Women will serve as one indication on how important the advancement of women – the half of the population of the world – is to the United Nations.

Lastly, a human rights-based approach to development needs to be firmly integrated into the post-2015 agenda. Particular attention needs to be paid to the promotion of gender equality and the rights and status of women and girls. Women are subjected to human rights violations more often than men. One of the most pervasive human rights violations is violence against women and we can’t emphasize enough that it is a human rights violation under any circumstances. We also need to pay special attention to women and girls belonging to vulnerable groups and suffering from multiple forms of discrimination. At the same time, women need to be seen as agents of change. Without their full and equal contribution there cannot be long-term sustainable development.

Strengthening the rights and status of women promotes well-being of all, women and men, girls and boys. Finland continues to work in cooperation with all partners to make these human rights a reality for everyone. We have to see women as strong actors whose potential must be fully realized.

Thank you.