Mr President, Madam Executive Director, dear Colleagues,

Let me begin by thanking UN-Women and the Executive Director for the comprehensive Report on progress made on the strategic plan (2014-2017) including the midterm review of the strategic plan.

Promoting gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the realization of their rights remains a key priority for Finland. UN-Women is our close partner in this endeavor and I would like to reiterate our full support to the mandate and work of UN-Women.

Mr President,

Overall, progress towards gender equality has been too slow and uneven. In some contexts, it has even regressed. But what is positive is that several international processes and global accords, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, have placed gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls higher on the global agenda than ever before. We now have the opportunity to accelerate progress, and with committed and coherent action we can achieve gender equality by 2030.

UN-Women has an important role in the promotion of gender-sensitive implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The midterm review confirms the strategic plan’s continued relevance. We commend UN-Women for having achieved significant results in the last two years, and its commitment to continue its focus on sustained and enhanced progress. We welcome the strategic initiatives outlined in the report as they address many important issues, including leveraging UN-Women's coordination mandate,
implementing the Flagship Program Initiatives, fostering innovation and ensuring transparency and accountability.

The strategic initiatives also refer to tackling the root causes of multiple and intersectoral discrimination and structural inequalities which we regard as particularly important in ensuring that no one is left behind. This includes the need to mainstream disability into the gender equality agenda. *The Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities into Humanitarian Action* was launched at the World Humanitarian Summit. Finland was extremely pleased that UN-Women was among the first to endorse it. Let me also take this opportunity to invite all Member States to endorse the Charter. In the implementation of the Charter, it is crucial that special attention is paid to the participation and empowerment of women and girls with disabilities in all phases of humanitarian response. Moreover, protection of women and girls with disabilities from violence and abuse is an issue that must be addressed across all humanitarian action. Here UN-Women has an important role to play and it would be interesting to hear more about the Entity's work in this context.

UN-Women's work in areas such as ending violence against women and girls, promoting women’s increased leadership in peace and security and humanitarian response, women's economic empowerment and women's leadership and participation is equally crucial in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals.

We must also aim to ensure that UN-Women has sufficient funding and resources to carry out its strategic plan and its mandate at large, and to deliver strong results on the ground. We continue to stress the importance of core resources as they support the full implementation of the strategic plan. We also see further potential in engaging non-traditional donors, the private sector in particular, and in strengthening the role of National Committees. We welcome efforts to seek innovative sources of financing.

Mr President,

It is important that lessons from this review and our discussions also feed into the next strategic plan (2018-2021). We very much look forward to the roadmap for its development which will be presented to this Board later this year and to engaging in the process.

Thank you for your attention.