

**LDC5 side-event: Holistic and multisectoral interventions to address systemic and structural vulnerabilities in LDCs: Lessons learned from Angola.**

**Date: 6 March 2023**

**Time: 12:15-13:45**

**Statement by H.E. Ms. Johanna Sumuvuori, State Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland**

Your Excellencies, Ministers, dear participants, Secretary General.

It is my pleasure to be here and represent Finland. It was very inspiring to hear examples and experiences from Angola and Ethiopia and especially, it was music to my ears every time I heard that working beyond silence and engaging with all the different stakeholders.

I think for Finland working for development is something that we feel personal about because we have been a developing country ourselves.

After the second world war, Finland was a relatively rural, agrarian society where we started to build our own capacities, and we did it actually by investing in human capital, education, self- and social services, and healthcare system. And we did not do it because of the charity, we did it because we did not have to afford to leave any talents behind, to build our society in those conditions.

So, we needed those investments in human capital and people and our national GDP benefitted from those investments. So, we have a development story of our own, which is why I think we are in a good place to discuss these issues. We actually have our story depicted in a little booklet. How Finland became Finland: the development story of a Nordic country. Because we have a little bit different story than other Nordic countries. This is also online, and it is a beautiful little book which depicts everything from our foreign policy to education sector, to social, and health and security sectors we have developed to build this prosperous welfare society we are today.

But, when it comes to our development priorities in LDCs, yes, it's true that our focus has been quite a long time in LDCs, actually, more than one-third of our development funding goes to LDCs at the moment. The figure was in 2021 of 34%, and we are very committed to channel at least 0.2% of our GNI (Gross National Income) to the poorest countries in the world.

I think that it's really good to have new thinking and actions that are really required to do any sustainable development and to achieve also the UN Sustainable Development Goals and we need those innovative solutions and stronger cooperation between the state, private sector, civil society, academia and research institutions.

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I very much liked how in both examples of Angola and Ethiopia these things were underlined. How we need to engage all the stakeholders because we all know that all the wisdom does not live in the government even though we think that we are very wise. I think we need everyone's challenge and thinking at those tables and that has been something that our government has tried to do during this government. So, when we outline our government programme, we want to build an inclusive Finland and that means that we want to listen to different societal stakeholders in everything we do, in our own decision-making.

So, we need a vibrant private sector, we need to engage them because the government still not have all the money either. So, it's really good to have the private sector involved and they also need to be engaged in the sustainable thinking and we have to take really seriously corporate responsibility and certain ethical guidelines as well when we engage with the private sector. So, due diligence is something that we have been talking a lot during this government in Finland, in our own actions as well.

The private sector is often tasked with generating new added value by producing goods and services and moreover creating decent jobs of which we talked also a lot about and strengthening the economy by engaging in foreign trade. And it also plays a key role in building future economic relations with regional and international trading partners.

Finland firmly believes that supporting the integration of all countries, including those facing development challenges in global trade and helping countries to leverage trading opportunities can significantly contribute to sustainable development through economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction.

Tangible results can and have been achieved in this area and furthermore, the Trade Facilitation component of the EU-UNCTAD Joint Programme for Angola has its key role to play in bolstering institutional framework and strengthening local expertise in this area.

In order to maintain a strengthen economic resilience is crucial that countries can integrate to the global trade and sustainable value chains, and I very much heard that this has been something that has been really highly considered in Ethiopia and Angola building this green transition but in a sustainable way and engaging all the stakeholders. So, I want to also commend your respective countries on that. How we can do this? We need to support business

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activities and the development of rule-based and investment friendly business environments, sustainable value chains, information to infrastructure and trading opportunities as well.

And investment in sustainable connections in transport, energy, and the digital economy are key instruments in promoting structural change in the economy. It is also important to strengthen authorities' ability to regulate and open trade in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. I think we cannot underline that enough: that regulators and authorities need to be really on board with this.

Addressing the urgent priority of climate change and leveraging the opportunities that exist in the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution will also be essential. For many countries with development challenges as well as small island states, climate change is already an existing challenge and question, it is not something in the future, it is a question of today, as also for many countries, you know, on the African continent.

We underline, particularly, also the role of women in this work and it was really good to hear about those targets and achievements that have been already done. I understood that 34% of women were engaged in this programme and the target is now even higher for Ethiopia. So, I think that is something I cannot stress more as Finn, because our society also has benefitted from everyone's work, by meaning that when we were that rural and agrarian society and we started to build this prosperous welfare state we needed everyone on board, we needed women and their labour, we needed to build their capacities and that is why I cannot stress this enough.

So, this means increasing women's employment opportunities and providing financing services to female entrepreneurs and companies whose products and services are designed specifically for women.

Other important groups are the young people on the African continent who play a very key role in developing the continent. It is a huge number of people and there is a lot of talents, looming talents, that we have to take into consideration. And it is also a question of the generations' prospects for the future; it is our responsibility to give any young people in any country prospects and possibilities for the future, and that we can do by creating decent jobs for the younger growing population in Africa and it is a key challenge facing the continent and we want to be involved in this work.

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Solutions to improve access to quality education is also very important. I think when it comes to Finland our story started with education because first, we realized that we need to teach everyone to read. So, literacy was one key element and then providing high-quality early years of primary and higher education to everyone who needs that, in order to build our own talent and capacities. It was our capacity, national capacity building. So, education sector is very important here and that also can significantly boost economic growth, competitiveness and the employment of women and youth in African countries.

Innovation - and digitalization - is also very important, and we are a country of engineers, we have a lot of companies and small companies and bigger ones, most of you might have heard about Nokia. But I think that is something that is very much needed today, a stable, and predictable business environment that encourages innovation is essential for private sector and also for economic renewal. Which is why recently in Finland we had a parliamentary committee on research, innovation and investment, with our diverse resources of development and innovation. And it is really unanimous how across the political spectrum our parties see the significance to develop and also fund research, innovation and investments in order to be prosperous in the future as well. Because technology can also be outdated someday so we need to, we cannot, even Finland cannot rest on our laurels on things we already did when we had to do, no, we have to live every day with our eyes on the future.

When it comes to cooperation between Angola and Finland, we have been actually pleased to share knowledge and best practices for example in the telecommunication sector and information technology and meteorology. We have a lot of companies here, meteorological companies who are developing and providing early and warning weather systems and that is very crucial, especially when mitigating and adapting to climate change.

I am also very proud, I am not going to talk for long, but I also want to underline, I am very proud of our government's Africa strategy, which is the first-ever national Africa strategy. Which actually aims at developing, deepening, and diversifying Finland's relations to African countries and organizations. And that is in trade economy and politics, so that is not actually a development strategy, we also do have development policies but that is a kind of economic and trade strategy which is looking at mutual, shared interests when it comes for example to tackling the climate change and finding green transition solutions to help this world to tackle this looming climate crisis that we are unfortunately living in.

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So, there are a lot of opportunities also for both African and Finnish companies and of course, that is different in different parts of Africa. We are aware that we do not see Africa as a country, but as a very diverse continent with different challenges and different paths, but also a different know-how in different parts. We have had excellent research cooperation for example with Kenya and a lot of business opportunities already fruitful in many countries. So, you can also find our African strategy online, it is in English, in French, in Finnish, and in Swedish. And there is a great potential for building these business ties between Finland and African countries and they are manners as I said on a mutual interest-based.

During the African Nordic Foreign Ministers meeting last year, my Minister Mr. Pekka Haavisto was very pleased to deliver this meeting with Her Excellency Esmeralda Bravo Conde da Silva Mendonça and it was a really good opportunity for us in channel and to discuss also LDCs and things related to that.

So, I want to conclude by saying that Finnish, Finland and Finnish companies can play a part in helping African economies to adopt cleaner and more sustainable solutions and tackle the challenges arising from climate change and biodiversity loss.

I really want to thank you for giving me these inspiring words both from Angola and Ethiopia, I took a lot of notes, I will take them back to Finland and happy to discuss with you further. Thank you.