

Country: Finland

Speaker: Dr. Paavo Väyrynen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development

**HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY:
THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIOENERGY
ROME, 3-5 JUNE 2008**

**Statement by Dr Paavo Väyrynen,
Minister for Foreign Trade and Development of Finland**

Mr/ Mrs Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Twenty-one years ago, sustainable development was defined in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, the so called Brundtland Commission as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Five years later, in 1992 the leaders of the world met in Rio de Janeiro, in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, with the goal of establishing a sustainable world order. Today, sixteen years after Rio, we have gathered here in Rome in order to find a solution to the food crises, a problem that, I dare say, could have been avoided if the Rio commitments for sustainable development had been fully implemented.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Brundtland Commission already predicted the present food crises. It was based on a cross analysis of population growth, changing diets, urbanisation and unsustainable methods of agricultural production.

The Brundtland Commission was also able to warn about the climate change based on unsustainable energy policies. It gave recommendations on conservation of energy and on the production of renewable energy.

By the way, the same basic analysis was made by the Club of Rome as early as in the early 1970's.

The Brundtland Commission report formed the basis for the preparations of the Rio Conference. I was able to attend to the Rio Conference personally as Minister for Foreign Affairs. Before this Conference I revisited my speech from Rio. I am forced to say that unfortunately, I could have given the same speech also here in Rome. This concretely shows how the lessons of the Brundtland Commission and Rio Conference have not been learnt.

We have either neglected or failed to put into practice the Rio commitments. Basically the food crisis is caused by the unsustainability of the global development. Food prices are high because of the high prices of energy. Energy prices are high because of our failure to conserve energy and to develop renewable energy production. And, we have neglected sustainability in our food production.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Development, in order to be sustainable, must be based on efficient and environmentally responsible use of all of our scarce resources. The international community, and each individual state, has a common but differentiated responsibility to protect nature and natural resources. The challenge for the developing countries is to create development strategies that serve the achievement of their development goals in a sustainable manner. Industrialized countries also face a challenge: they must reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and implement policies which help to promote sustainable development globally.

We must heed to the lessons from the previous decades. Otherwise we are not going to be able to solve the current problems of climate change and the acute food crises.

We have to proceed from speeches and theory into action. The decision of the United Nations' Secretary General to launch a Food Security Task Force is an initiative that deserves our collective and full support if we want to promote a unified response to the global food price challenge in support of governments and affected populations. The reform process of FAO and the preparation of the joint strategy of FAO, WFP and IFAD are also steps that need to be taken in order to get more coherent, effective and up to date means to act.

I would like to underline the importance of a comprehensive approach to tackle the challenge of the food crises. Necessary as it is to respond to the immediate needs of the most vulnerable and others in need, it is equally important to see the problem, its causes and consequences in the longer perspective. In the longer term, agriculture and rural development is the key to solving the problem. Investment and attention to the agricultural sector must be revived. At the same time, however, we must review and analyse thoroughly the objectives and effects of other policies linked to food security: trade, environment, energy and climate change. In energy production we have to move on to the second generation of biofuels. Coordination, coherence and a comprehensive approach is needed if we really want to find a sustainable global solution to the problem. It is my sincere wish that this will take place at last.

I thank you for your attention.