

Your Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, thank you for the invitation to this annual ministerial meeting.

I started as a minister for foreign trade and development three months ago. It is great to talk with you today.

The Covid-19 pandemic, conflicts and Russia's unprovoked war on Ukraine have had negative impacts around the world, but the least developed countries have been hit the hardest.

We have to change this. I want to assure you that Finland is a great supporter of Sustainable Development Goals.

Finland developed from a war-torn agrarian society to what we are today. Some cornerstones of our development have been democracy, education, gender equality and using the potential of technology and innovation.

Finland has supported LDC countries since the beginning of our development assistance and we continue to build partnerships.

Finland contributes to development also as part of the EU. In 2022, EU and its Member States collectively provided 43% of global assistance. Global Gateway is the EU's effective contribution to pursue the SDGs.

In 2021 Finland, together with UN, we organised the first . Next forum will be held in the beginning of 2024. We have agreed to organise five more Forums annually.

The purpose is to bring together researchers and policy makers from LDC countries and elsewhere to find common solutions. LDC permanent representatives to UN will be invited. [JATKUU ]

The theme of each Forum is based on the Doha Program of Action. The next Forum will focus on the role of innovation in the structural transformation of societies.

I look forward to cooperation with UN and especially the LDC countries, as well as welcoming your representatives to Helsinki.