1. What are the global issues in sustainable development linked to environment? How far has India made progress in addressing these?

Ans: The promotion of economically, socially and ecologically sustainable development is specified as the central goal of Finland’s UN policy. It is also an integral element of the comprehensive approach to security involving the eradication of poverty and human rights based development. Finnish development policy and development cooperation are based on the Government Development Policy Programme adopted in 2007.

Finland also advocates mainstreaming of the Development Policy Programme’s cross-cutting themes in both the normative and operational work of the UN. The themes include: 1) the rights of women and girls and improvement of their status as well as strengthening gender equality and social equality; 2) promotion of the rights of groups at risk of exclusion – in particular, children, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities – and ensuring that they have equal opportunity to have an influence; 3) the fight against HIV/AIDS and regarding HIV/AIDS as a health-related and social development issue.

Finland contributes actively to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and its committees, and to implementation of the actions agreed in UN conferences. Within the framework of the UN, the focus is on broad-based efforts to promote sustainable development. Finland strives in the UN to intensify the development dimension and the effectiveness of multilateral aid.

Support for UN Development Activities

Finland considers that the UN and its specialised agencies and action programmes play a key role in the field of development policy. In development cooperation, Finland supports the authority of the UN, both at the level of individual countries and at its Headquarters. The goal of Finnish development policy is the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, Finland places emphasis on environment and climate issues, crisis prevention and support for peace processes.

At present, the main part of Finland’s core funding to the UN is targeted as general support to four key actors: the UN Development Programme (UNDP); the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF); the UN Population Fund (UNFPA); and the World Food Programme (WFP). Thematic funding through UN organisations is increasingly channelled to sustainable development, the environment, climate and forest questions, and to reinforcing the economic capacity of developing countries, their rule of law and trade policy expertise as well as efforts to combat global threats to health.

Together with other like-minded countries, Finland has gained visibility as a country dedicated to promotion of the status of women. The adoption of a comprehensive approach in the sector of sexual and reproductive health has been extremely important and efforts will be continued in various fora to promote the attainment of the MDGs. Finland also highlights the importance of education as an essential prerequisite for sustainable development and the strengthening of comprehensive security. Finland emphasises the critical importance for UN organisations and other actors to agree on a clear distribution of tasks and mutual coordination based on complementarity and coherence of activities in order to enhance efficiency both at the level of the Headquarters and in individual countries. Furthering the principle of One UN at country level is part of the UN reform.

Humanitarian Aid

The UN has a leading role in the coordination of humanitarian aid, and Finland channels a large part of its humanitarian aid through the UN system. Finland actively promotes the UN humanitarian reform process in order to strengthen the effectiveness of humanitarian aid. Finland provides support and funding to the new Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), established by the UN World Summit in 2005.

Humanitarian aid provided by Finland is both human rights based and needs-based. The aid given by Finland is grounded in needs assessments carried out by the UN and other organisations, the most important of which is the UN Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP). Humanitarian aid enables the restoration of circumstances where development can take place, thereby creating preconditions for the eradication of extreme poverty. Humanitarian action may advance peace efforts in conflict regions. It is important to pay attention to linking relief efforts to longer-term recovery and development activities. Humanitarian mine action also lays down preconditions for development and is in line with the continuum approach.

The Environment and Climate Change

Finland’s goal is the ability to address more comprehensively the challenges in the different policy areas and themes of sustainable development. The International Environmental Governance should be developed and strengthened as part of the UN reform. The UN should improve coordination of the work of its different organisations and programmes and promote the coherence of activities in matters concerning sustainable development and environment and climate change issues. International conventions on the environment should be processed in a more coordinated manner.

The UN and its Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) are the main fora of global climate policy. As a Member State of the EU, Finland’s primary goal is to reach agreement on a global convention on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions within the UN framework. Finland actively participates in negotiations on increasing the efficiency of international climate policy.

Addressing climate change issues more effectively in the UN system calls for optimal use of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) resources. In the framework of multilateral cooperation, priority is given to ensuring energy supplies for the poorest countries, in particular, and support for their adaptation to the impacts of climate change. Finland supports the forest policy process adopted by the UN, continues to participate in the activities of the UN forest forum, and promotes the creation of legally binding regulations concerning forests.

Development of Peacebuilding Activities