

International Helvi Sipilä Seminar 9 March 2023, UN CSW67

Welcoming words: Pia-Lisa Sundell

Pia-Lisa Sundell, chair of the Coalition of Finnish Women's Associations – NYTKIS  
Good morning everyone here in New York and good afternoon to people following the live-stream around Europe. I'd like to pass on a warm welcome for the Minister for Nordic Cooperation and Equality of Finland, your excellences, colleagues here in New York and in Finland and everyone who has taken the time to come together to the 17th organized Helvi Sipilä seminar to discuss Women's Human Rights and Technological Innovations. A great thanks to all the fellow organizers. My name is Pia-Lisa Sundell and I have the honor to be the chair of the Coalition of Finnish Women's Associations – NYTKIS this year. NYTKIS is an organization that connects all women's associations in Finland under the same roof for a more equal society

I find it extremely important that we've been able to come together again after the uncertainty of the pandemic years and that the doors of UN have opened for civil society and larger delegations once again. As we have unfortunately seen in the past years cooperation is mandatory to face and solve the issues of today and the future. We live in a time of multiple crisis and the upcoming years don't seem to change that. With societal change and progress we are also faced with new issues and threats to gender equality and the safety of women and girls. Technological development has altered everything from the ways we think to the ways that we spend time together, work and learn. When the idea of internet was first introduced to the world there were hopes of it being a major tool for democratization and a horizontal source for information. Now we see that these hopes were idealistic and unrealistic. The scale of societal change that new technologies have sprouted has been immense and there is no way of stating it to be all good or all bad.

In the latest national child victim report that was published about a month ago, rising numbers of abuse of young girls and non-binary children in social media were reported. The study shows that 60 percent of non-binary children tell to be harassed or abused in the internet. The same number for girls is 43 percent and for boys 26 percent. These numbers show the scope of this issue we are facing. Internet is a big part of children's lives and it's argued to be one of the key "surroundings" or sites where modern life takes place. We as equality workers, activists, professionals working with societal change and as people, need to ask ourselves, what does the future look like when almost every other girl faces harassment in their mundane living space. Another issue on this topic is the volume of gendered hate speech that is aimed especially to narrow down women's participation in society. Last year the CEDAW committee gave Finland a recommendation on reducing gender based hate speech. During the latest governmental term when Finland has had young women in political leadership, numbers of gendered hate speech have been rising, shows Stratcom report on gendered hate speech. Studies show that hate speech especially limits women's and marginalized group's democratic rights and by doing so puts the future of the entire democratic system at risk.

When I look around here in New York in the sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women I am positive that there is hopeful way forward. Around the globe girls and women face similar issues in order to find solutions we need to share information,

tools, experiences and support. In these uncertain times we must rely on each other and remember that womens and girls rights are by definition human rights. Again a warmest of welcome and thank you for joining us today.