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SPEECH BY MR. MARTTI AHTISAARI, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
FINLAND AT THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN
COPENHAGEN ON MARCH 11, 1995

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Permit me, Mr President, to join the preceding speakers in
expressing my gratitude to the UN Secretariat and our hosts,
the Danish Government, for the impressive effort they have
made to ensure the success of this epoch-making conference. I
would also like to extend to you, Mr President, my warmest
congratulations and good wishes for the demanding task you
have undertaken in guiding our deliberations.

~~Mr President,~~

This Summit is about social development - a topic long
overdue for consideration in this format and at the highest
political level. Yet, it is evident that the scope of the
matters being deliberated here goes far beyond social
development in its conventional sense.

This Summit is also about a new, emerging view of
development. It stresses the importance of individual human
beings and their interaction both with each other and with
the physical environment. This new emphasis on

Mr President,

This Summit has a crucial role to play in the process of reforming and reshaping the United Nations. The need for reform is widely recognized and there is an abundance of visionary proposals for measures to change the UN to make it correspond to present-day realities better than it now does. The Nordic countries as a group have contributed a number of suggestions. The report of the Commission on Global Governance contains many insights which point in the right direction. The UN must fit into a system of international governance, which will have to be brought into being if humankind is to resolve its common problems rationally. The UN can never be an organ of world government, nor should it aspire to that status. But it can be a "global town meeting", articulating the needs of the international community as well as legitimating and implementing policies agreed upon internationally.

Finland has always been among the foremost advocates of the people-centered development concept. This is a reflection of our democratic, even individualistic tradition coupled with an advanced sense of social responsibility. It also led us to adopt the idea of the welfare state as an answer to the socioeconomic challenges of our time. Serious doubts have recently been expressed about the viability of the welfare state model. In view of the economic difficulties facing us today, it may well be that the model requires adjustments, even far-reaching changes. But I am convinced that the basis of the welfare state ideology is sound - a society for all, regardless of wealth and status; solidarity with the weakest and most vulnerable. This is the hard core of the Nordic experience that we are proud to share with other nations. It is gratifying to note that this spirit permeates the final documents of this Summit.