

President of the Republic, Mrs Tarja Halonen, Your Excellencies, Distinguished guests,

It is a great honour for us to welcome you to our annual forum to discuss current UN issues. In the previous years here at Hanasaari, we have discussed the implementation of the UN Resolution 1325, the UN reforms and the future status of the UN, the UN and the new security challenge, to name a few subjects. All questions high up on the Finnish and Swedish foreign policy agendas.

I would like to thank our distinguished speakers – it is a great honour for us, the organizers, that we have been able to attract so prominent individuals, who all have important experiences to share with us today.

We are extremely pleased that the President of the Republic has showed such a great interest towards our debates regarding the UN, and we wish you warmly welcome to Hanasaari!

We are also very glad that Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb is contributing with a key note today.

Senator Romeo Dallaire, who carries a for us immeasurable wealth of experience from the crisis in Rwanda, is today participating on screen from Quebec City in Canada. Contemporary videoconferencing technology made his participation possible, when the travel arrangements from Canada encountered insurmountable obstacles. A warm welcome to our forum, senator Dallaire! We hope to keep you with us!

Both Mr Jan Egeland, Director of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and Mr Hans Corell, former Under-secretary-General for Legal Affairs and the Legal Counsel of the UN, have experience spanning many years from the UN and working for peace. We are pleased to once again have you as our guests at our UN forum.

The theme of today, Responsibility to protect, was hailed as one of the most important achievements of the High-level plenary meeting.

The endorsement resulted in breaking the principle of state sovereignty for the first time in the history of the UN. The answer was found to the question of how the international community can intervene in situations where a country's population needs to be rescued, without abusing public international law. Through this process, the global community wants to ensure that genocide, as portrayed in Rwanda and the situation in Kosovo, which resulted in the NATO intervention, will not occur again.

However, there remain unresolved issues regarding how to implement Responsibility to Protect in practice. This is also the simple reason for today's Hanaforum. What

have we learned? What can and should we do? Some countries have adopted a more cautious stance towards R2P. Today we are responsible for maintaining momentum in the debate of Responsibility to Protect.

I want to thank our partners in preparing this event – the United Nations Associations of Finland and Sweden, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, The Embassy of Canada in Helsinki and the Finnish Red Cross, my previous beloved employer.

With this great audience I see here today I, have no doubt that we will have interesting and insightful discussion for the next two hours.

With these remarks I have the pleasure to give the floor to the Moderator for today's seminar, Member of Parliament and Finnish Special Envoy for African crises, Mr Pekka Haavisto.

Looking forward to a frank and straight discussion in a true Nordic spirit on this challenging subject today.