



2 November 2016 - The Prime Ministers of the five Nordic countries kicked-off this year's session of the [Nordic Council](#) , with a debate on the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), which were adopted by the United Nations one year ago.

Once a year the Prime Ministers of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden engage with the members of the Nordic Council, the inter-parliamentary body of the Nordic region. This year the theme of the Prime Ministers' debate of the Council's 68th session was, 'how can the Nordic countries cooperate on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals'.

Juha Sipilä, the Prime Minister of Finland, started with maintaining that the world would have had a better starting point to reach the sustainable goals, if women's situation in the world was better.

Gender equality is one of the 17 goals of the so-called Agenda 2030 for Sustainable

Development, as well as goals such as eradicating poverty and hunger, combatting climate change and protecting the planet.

“Not even the Nordic countries fulfill the sustainable development goals for gender equality, employment and climate”, the Finnish Prime Minister said. “Here we have to redouble our efforts. What we can contribute to get there is the Nordic welfare model, which is highly regarded in the world. Maybe it should be a an export product,” said Juha Sipilä.

The Prime Minister of Norway, Erna Solberg agreed that the time is right to elevate gender equality as an issue on the world stage. However she warned the Nordics not to impose their solutions on other countries.

She also pointed out the difference between the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Agenda; while the former applied mostly to the developing world, the latter is universal.

“The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals have made all countries developing countries, including the Nordic countries”, Solberg said.

Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven said the the Nordic Countries should take a leading role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

“We have something that inspires others: The strength of our welfare and our equal societies. This has made us the world’s most competitive and integrated region of the world,” Stefan Löfven said.

Having just resigned in the aftermath of Saturday’s parliamentary elections in Iceland, Sigurður Ingi Jónsson, the Icelandic Prime Minister did not participate in the debate. However, the results of the Icelandic elections were applauded at a meeting of UN officials and Nordic Council members on the sustainable agenda.

“There are two statistics we should have in mind”, Asger Ryhl, of UN Women, said. “The first is 33%, the proportion of women who suffer gender based violence in their lifetime. The second is 48%, the proportion of women just elected to the Althing, the Icelandic parliament.”

### Additional links:

- [Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [Nordic Council](#)