
Finland Independence Day Special

Climate needs attention, despite COVID-19

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Finnish Independence Day takes place every Dec. 6 and it is a natural time for reflecting on the past year and planning for the next one. What have we done and what did we learn? What can

we improve and harness for the future?

COVID-19 has hit us all hard and continues to do so, much more than anyone could have envisaged when the pandemic began. We have been waiting for things to return to normal or turn into a new normal. But can there even be a new normal if the eventual disappearance of the COVID-19 crisis will not make another existential crisis disappear? We have to tackle the pandemic, but the pandemic is not an excuse to wait in tak-

ing action on climate change.

This year, world leaders gathered in Glasgow, Scotland, for the U.N. climate change summit. The message was clear; concrete steps toward halting the current temperature rise and biodiversity loss need to take place now.

We are racing against time. Northern and Arctic areas see temperatures rising faster with more visible impact than in many other parts of the world. We want our grandchildren to be able to live in a world as close as possible to what we experience today, hopefully in a new normal we can still manage.

There are countless ways we can all contribute to climate action as societies as well as individuals. Coming from Finland, let me share a little of our experience.

Finland was the first country to create a national “circular economy” road map and we are happy to share that experience with others (www.sitra.fi/en/publications/how-to-create-a-national-circular-economy-road-map). Circularity, when executed properly,

can absolutely revolutionize our thinking on materials and resources. Finnish professor Pirjo Kaariainen recently stated that she'd like the word waste to be abolished completely — there is just “new” raw material that we have to learn to utilize. There are also new, groundbreaking Finnish innovators who, for example, turn cellulose and discarded textiles into new fabrics, and forestry industry byproducts into microplastic-free packaging materials. In fighting climate change both circular thinking and innovation are vital.

Throughout history, Finland has adapted to change, shown resilience in the face of adversity and persistently kept moving forward. Climate change is a challenge we are determined to face the same way, together with our partners. The time to act is now.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.