

2.0 Speech of Mrs Maarit Vierunen, Deputy Mayor of Helsinki

Date: 2026- June -13 from 09:30 to 10 :00

Location: Hotel Hilton, Kalastajatorppa

Ilari Rantakari

Many of you will have noticed, whilst walking through the streets of Helsinki, that today is a very special day, marked by some rather lively celebrations to mark Helsinki Day. Due to her official duties, the Deputy Mayor responsible for defence will be joining us via video conference, and we would like to thank her for speaking to us about the city council's role in protecting the public.

I now give the floor to **Ms Maarit Vierunen**, representing Helsinki City Council.

Maarit Vierunen

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Helsinki. My name is Maarit Vierunen. I am the Deputy Mayor for Social Services, Health and Emergency Services here in Helsinki. Helsinki is extremely proud of its extensive network of shelters across the Helsinki region.

We have around five thousand five hundred civil defence shelters. Together, public and private shelters provide protection for around nine hundred thousand people – those who live, work, study or visit Helsinki. One of the unique features of the Finnish shelter system is its dual-use principle. These facilities are not left unused in peacetime. Instead, they serve the community in many different ways. Some operate as car parks, sports halls, underground stations or swimming pools. We even have a go-kart track in a shelter. And my own son has played football in one of these underground facilities.

These spaces can be converted to their role of protecting the population within seventy-two hours. In addition to the large public shelters, every residential block has its own shelter. In normal times, these spaces are often used as storage facilities by residents. Nevertheless, they remain an essential part of our preparedness system. Our approach is based on the idea that even in times of crisis or conflict, Helsinki continues to function. We are prepared to keep schools, libraries, hospitals, restaurants and public transport running as normally as possible. As Finland's capital and a NATO city, Helsinki is at the forefront of national preparedness. We recognise that, in the event of a crisis, Helsinki would be a prime target.

Given the region's size and economic importance, relocating key export operations elsewhere in Finland is simply not a realistic option. This is why close cooperation between the authorities, businesses, organisations and citizens is so important. Preparedness is not the responsibility of any single organisation. It is a shared effort across all sectors of society. I hope you have an informative and inspiring stay in Helsinki, and that you learn more about the Finnish model of comprehensive security and preparedness. Thank you, and I wish you a wonderful stay in Helsinki.

Ilari Rantakari

Thank you, Deputy Mayor.