



Consider it solved

You know the scene from the movies. Someone falls ill on an airplane and panic ensues. The purser grabs the microphone and asks

whether there's a doctor onboard.

In Finland we love solving practical problems – so much that we might want to rephrase the purser's question as follows: "Is there a Finn onboard?"

This is how a newly published report on the Brand of Finland kicks off (read it at www.tehtavasuoemelle.fi). Developed between 2008 and 2010 by a group of Finns from all walks of life, it's wonderful stuff. There's no lack of ambition. Just what the doctor ordered.

BRANDING A COUNTRY can be a dubious affair. A whole bunch of blah, blah aimed at attracting tourists to sandy beaches, snowy mountains and historic sites. Pictures of "smiley, happy people holding hands."

This report, entitled *A Mission for Finland*, is completely different. Gone are the glossy pictures and tacky marketing phrases.

The report is all about doing, "solving the world's most wicked problems," as the authors put it.

I simply love this package. So much that when the report was published in November of 2010, I wanted to hug

Jorma Ollila, the man behind Nokia's success, for chairing the brand delegation. So much for Finnish men being shy!

WHY AM I so enthusiastic about it?

Because this is real, practical stuff. The report concludes that Finland has three strengths above all: great schools, clean nature and a functional society. Put those strengths into practice, and things will start to happen. Give a task to all Finns, from kids to grandparents, as the report did.

Ask the kids at school to talk to those who sometimes are a bit shy to talk with others. Ask grandparents to teach handicrafts to members of the IT generation. Ask the foreign ministry to organise a Martti Ahtisaari-themed day on peace mediation. Ask people to scrap bottled

GIVE A TASK TO FINNS AND
THEY WILL TAKE CARE OF IT.

water and drink clean and tasty Finnish tap water instead.

And finally, combine the tasks with a vision. A vision that in 2030 Finland will be the problem-solver of the world. A vision that all the thousands of Finnish lakes are filled with drinkable water and that half of the food that we eat is organic.

THE FUNNY THING with country brands is that you cannot create them from scratch. When it comes to countries, what you see is what you get.

Finland might have warm and sunny summers, but we won't be branding ourselves as a beach paradise in January. I might, however, persuade you to set up a business and move your family to Finland by telling you that we are often ranked among the top three countries in education, way of life, security and happiness. Finland is, quite simply, a comfortable place to live.

Oh, and by the way, if you begin to feel ill, don't worry. On Finnair flights there will always be a Finn onboard. Consider that problem solved. ●

ALEXANDER STUBB IS FINLAND'S
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

