



**United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), Rio+20
statement by**

the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, H.E. Mr. Urmas Paet,

Rio de Janeiro, June 21, 2012

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The world around us is changing rapidly. But too often we focus only on the political and economic aspects of the change. The more the world changes and develops, the more we need the development to be sustainable. And there really is no alternative. Sustainable development is about our children's future, our common future as humankind.

Resource efficiency, co-operation and synergies between different fields and sectors are the key elements to promoting sustainable economy. It is important to make sure that we are not living beyond our means when it comes to natural resources. In order to achieve resource-efficiency, it is necessary to raise awareness, and to change the behaviour of producers and consumers – sustainable production and consumption has to become the norm. Energy, industry, agriculture and transport have to rely more on environmentally friendly technologies.

To give you a concrete example, let me tell you about my country – Estonia. Estonia regained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, one year before the Rio Earth Summit. A grass-roots environmental movement played a pivotal role in the late 80s in our struggle to restore our independence. Our history and past experience have made rapid change and development an integral part of Estonian economy and society. As early as in 1995, Estonia adopted a law on sustainable development. I would dare to say that our Government has always been following the principles of sustainable development attempting to address all the relevant aspects of development coherently. In 2005 we approved the development strategy “Sustainable Estonia 21” until the year 2030.

Mr. President,

Estonia is often known as E-stonia due to our extensive and successful use of modern information and communications technology. As a pioneer in the adoption of e-solutions, Estonia has proven that innovative use of ICT contributes to development. This is why we have focused on e-solutions in our development co-operation. Since sustainable development is one of Estonia's development assistance priorities, we intend to increase our official development assistance in the coming years and to channel it even more into environmentally friendly economic and human development. Estonia has successfully made use of e-solutions, including a paperless e-cabinet, an e-healthcare system, mobile parking, e-school, e-voting and extensive coverage of free WiFi. We stand ready to share our experience with all interested development partners.

Estonia has recently demonstrated how individuals of a small country's civil society can come up with an idea that becomes a global project. This is Estonia's "World Cleanup" - "Let's Do It!" as we call it in our own country. We introduced "World Cleanup 2012" here in Rio just two days ago. This project engages 100 million active people all around the world in the fight against 100 million tons of illegal waste in 100 countries. The result will be a cleaner, better and more sustainable world to live in. This is a good example that change is possible, if there is a genuine will and forces get joined.

I would also like to mention a unique project that is underway in Estonia with the Japanese carmaker Mitsubishi. New infrastructure is currently being built to recharge electric cars throughout the country. Over 500 new electric cars have been taken into use by social workers of local governments. The same project also aims to make it cheaper for people to purchase electric cars.

More than a half of Estonian land is covered by forest and it is one of the biggest resources in Estonia both in natural and economic terms. Sustainable forest management is vital to our interest. We also use the "polluter pays principle", which directs environmental charges back into the improvement of the environment.

Mr. President,

Sustainable development is a priority of the European Union. The review of the EU sustainable Development Strategy, adopted by the Commission in 2009 stipulates that sustainable development is truly a cross cutting issue. But our common goal of sustainable development is possible only if all states respect and promote human rights and freedom for all, as we have agreed here in the Rio+20 political declaration. Estonia believes firmly that democracy, good governance and the rule of law are essential, if we want to report back success in 10 years time.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to finish by saying that Estonia is a strong believer in multilateralism, and joins the consensus on the Rio+20 political declaration, even if in the ideal world we would have wanted to see a sharper commitment by the world leaders to make our planet more sustainable for its 7 billion people.

Thank you for your attention and together with you all I'm looking forward to an increasingly sustainably developing world. Let's do it!