



PERMANENT MISSION
OF ESTONIA TO THE UN

Presentation of the Estonian Voluntary National Review

High Level Political Forum

Mr Hanno Pevkur, Minister of Internal Affairs of Estonia

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Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

It is the privilege to present you our voluntary review on implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. We are proud to be among the first countries to do so today.

To start, I'd like to present some general facts about Estonia. We are a small country with its population of 1,3 million people. After regaining our independency in 1991, our GDP per capita has grown approximately 20 times and is today 18 thousand USD per capita according to the World Bank. Estonia is 31st in the world on the Human Development Index and of course every Estonian is guaranteed both political rights and civil freedoms, including freedom of speech and expression.

We are ranked 8th globally in economic freedom and 29th in competitiveness. 90% of Estonia's territory is covered with broadband internet connection. That has given us the opportunity to become a very efficient society and as many like to call us - E-estonia. Both e-government and e-governance provide high level of transparency, guaranteeing a low level of corruption. We have the highest rate of business startups per capita in Europe, Skype and Transferwise were born in Estonia.

According to OECD's programme for international Student Assessment rankings Estonia holds 2nd place in Europe and 4th place in the world in the quality of

education system. By the Yale Environmental Performance index, which covers ecosystem protection and issues of public health we are ranked 8th in the world.

So, we are doing well, but are we satisfied? Of course not, we want to achieve more and that's why also sustainable development is very important to us.

Esteemed colleagues,

Without further delay, I would like to present you the main findings of the Estonian voluntary review on the implementation of 2030 Agenda. The Review highlights those challenges where increased efforts are needed. It also shares positive examples regarding SDG-s. The review describes main measures and activities for each of the 17 goals, including actions of government and civil society.

Estonia has considerable experience in advancing sustainable development. In 1995 - we adopted the Sustainable Development Act, which set the basis for sustainable development and long-term planning. Our Parliament adopted the National Sustainable Development Strategy called „Sustainable Estonia 21“, which sets goals in the fields of culture, economics, society and the environment. Our Government develops its strategies and action plans in coherence with the Sustainable Estonia 21.

The Estonian coordination mechanism for sustainable development issues involves government institutions and stakeholders from all relevant spheres. The implementation and monitoring of sustainable development issues is coordinated centrally by the Government Office.

The Estonian Sustainable Development Commission was formed in 1996. It is an advisory body consisting of NGO umbrella-organizations and covers different fields of sustainable development including but not limited to education, environmental protection, culture, children, health, local governments, academia, private companies, and agriculture. The Commission has launched an analyses of the Estonian sustainable development strategy in the light of 2030 Agenda and global trends.

In addition to the Commission, an inter-ministerial working group on sustainable development is in place.

Keeping track of progress in a systematic and transparent way is essential for delivering the 2030 Agenda. Estonian sustainable development indicators are updated on a regular basis and cover all relevant sustainable development related topics. This year, we will start the renewal of these indicators in order to measure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

We have considerable experience in using national sustainable development indicators, however it will be a challenge for Estonia to provide data that is needed for measuring the SDG-s at a global level. According to estimates from Estonian Statistics Offices, 14% of global sustainable development indicators are measurable in Estonia at the moment.

One way of tackling this issue could be the use of innovative and ICT solutions for data collection such as applying the application of big data. This could also help to reduce the administrative burden of monitoring and reporting.

Dear audience,

The Estonian review demonstrates that our government and stakeholders are already implementing measures and taking actions in the fields of all 17 sustainable development goals. The priority areas of the Estonian Government's Work Programme already reflect several SDG-s such as economic growth and productivity, state and administrative reform, local government reform, and assistance for low-income persons and families with children.

Now, I would like to share with you some positive results as well as challenges in implementing this ambitious Agenda.

Our rich biodiversity stands out. Approximately half of our land is covered with forest, and various wetlands make up about a tenth of our surface area. To preserve biodiversity and ensure favorable conditions for endangered species and habitats, one fifth of our territory is under protection.

Our Government provides quick and extensive access to public services electronically through e-services. It takes only five minutes for an individual to

submit taxes without the aid of an accountant. For this reason, 95% of citizens declare their income online. In Estonia, you can start a company online in only 20 minutes. This enables entrepreneurs to begin conducting business the same day.

These e-services can be used through electronic identity platform – the electronic ID-card. These days, our digital ID is available globally. Estonia is the first country to offer e-Residency — a transnational digital identity available to anyone in the world interested in administering a location-independent business online. e-Residency additionally enables secure and convenient digital services that facilitate credibility and trust online. We already have more than 10,000 e-Residents from 130 **countries** and the number keeps growing fast.

In Estonia, high quality education is accessible and free of charge for everyone regardless of gender, religion or socio-economic background.

However, the review has also shown areas where the Estonian government needs continued efforts toward implementation of the SDG-s and Estonia's own targets. The main challenges lie in achieving productivity growth, developing an energy- and resource efficient economy, lowering CO2 emissions per capita, improving the lives of low income people and decreasing the gender pay gap. In addition, we need to raise general awareness of the Agenda 2030 and create ownership of SDG-s.

We find that ICT has great potential in addressing these challenges and accelerating achievements in all of the 17 SDGs. Estonia is dedicated to contribute to fostering innovative technological solutions that help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. As a pioneer in the adoption of e-solutions, Estonia has proven that innovative use of ICT contributes to improving economic development, good governance, transparency, resource efficiency and human development. Therefore, we are convinced that the benefits from science, technology and innovation (STI) should be used for implementing SDGs.

There is always a lack of resources – be it people, finances, natural resources or other, therefore as a small country, we know that a clearer focus must be set for national STI programs by improving the efficiency of their implementation. One solution is to select and manage STI investments using the smart specialization

method. This means encouraging innovation-driven development in fields with the highest potential for growth. For example, In Estonia we have specified following fields of growth: information and communication technology horizontally through other sectors; health technologies and services and resource efficiency.

Achieving the 2030 Agenda universally requires solidarity, and Estonia is committed to support other countries. We have gradually increased our Official Development Assistance (ODA) over the years. Not long ago, Estonia itself was a recipient country of ODA. The new five -year Strategy for Estonian Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid is based on international development agreements, e.g. the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, as well as the development policy decisions and guidelines of the European Union.

Our development cooperation focuses on supporting democracy, advancing peace and stability, introducing good governance practices, guaranteeing human rights, improving the lives of women and children and promoting economic growth. We have also contributed to the quality of education, development of health care and climate change issues. Estonia contributes 4 million euros for the financing of international climate cooperation.

Estonia also promotes more extensive application of ICTs, and we have carried out projects in 50 countries for introducing e-governance solutions. For example, we have funded a project aiming to provide and improve satellite internet connectivity in remote and vulnerable areas of the Pacific for Small Island Developing States.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Estonia is fully committed to achieve the SDGs as we consider them an effective set of tools for paving the way towards sustained economic growth, preserved environment, human development, justice, peace and security. In implementation of the 2030 Agenda, we should all keep in mind its ultimate aim: reaching these goals and targets will leave our children a world that is more sustainable and stable.

The process of preparation for the review has been a challenging but valuable experience for Estonia. It has helped us to map the baseline for implementation of

the Agenda, raise political and public awareness and to create ownership. I encourage other countries to volunteer and present their national reviews in upcoming years.

We would like to conclude with a short video.

Thank you!