

**Statement by Mr. Kęstutis Navickas
Minister of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania**

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN 2030 AGENDA IN LITHUANIA

1st slide

Good morning Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

The world is moving forward in implementing Sustainable Development Goals. Today, I am honoured, as the Minister of Environment of the Republic Lithuania, to present our Voluntary National Review.

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Lithuania has welcomed the 2030 Agenda, as a broad, universal and relevant policy framework. We have evaluated and revised our national policies from a sustainable development perspective. The cross cutting manner of all 17 SDGs promotes synergies across different policy sectors and paves a way to set concrete actions and necessary national budget allocations.

Today, I will focus on both: Lithuania's national priorities, such as reduction of poverty, strengthening of public health, development of innovative economy and smart energy, quality education and development cooperation, as well as the theme of this year's forum "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies".

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Social dimension is one of the fundamental pillars of sustainable development. **Family** is the foundation of a sustainable and resilient society. Therefore, Lithuania pays great attention to social policy and support for families. We have created favourable financial conditions for the sustainable growth of young families, by introducing a flat-rate **allowance for a child** and implementing financial incentives to help families purchase their first **home**. Furthermore, we have started a reorganization of the **institutional care system**. It will enable every person with mental or physical disabilities to receive individual services according to their needs, and every child left without parental care to grow up in a family or at least in the conditions as close as possible to a family, thus adhering to the principle of "leaving no one behind".

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Inclusive and quality **education** for all generations is essential to ensure the well-being of the society. In Lithuania, **general education curricula** are updated constantly to reflect real life issues, integrating such topics as sustainable development, creativity, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, science and technology. Lithuania further improves the accessibility to **higher education**. From 2018, we will introduce free of charge bachelor studies. Statistics show that Lithuanians are among the most **educated nations** in the world, based on the number of persons with secondary or higher education, and the unemployment rate of Lithuanian students is one of the lowest in Europe. A great deal of attention is also paid to **adult education**. Lifelong learning opportunities are provided in the Universities of Third Age, which are very popular in Lithuania. They provide our seniors with a possibility to stay active, learn new things, socialize and travel.

5th slide

Good **health** is another prerequisite for a sustainable and resilient society. Lithuania has implemented integrated **health care service** models, which meet new present-day needs. Our focus is on treating heart and cardiovascular diseases, which are the main cause of death among both Lithuanian men and women. Aiming at further improving public health, Lithuania makes a major effort to combat **harmful habits** and to promote **physical activity** and a **balanced diet** for children and adults. **Children's nutrition** has a huge impact on human development, especially during the first years of a child's life. Therefore, Lithuania implements the UNICEF Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative that helps to improve maternal and child's health by promoting breastfeeding and educating about healthy eating habits from a young age. About 10 percent of Lithuanian teens self-report as overweight and while this is one of the lowest scores among OECD countries, the trend over the last decade is troubling. In response to that, we have introduced a **progressive healthy eating system**, which has resulted in elimination of soft drinks and food with no nutritional value in schools, kindergartens and children's care institutions.

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Safe, connected and inclusive living environment, including modern **cities and settlements**, is paramount to sustainable and healthy society.. Thus, Lithuania mobilizes resources to foster sustainable urban and territorial development.

Currently, Lithuania is in a process of developing a long-term **integrated spatial and territorial development policy** until 2030, with an ambitious vision until 2050. A new **master plan** for the territory of Lithuania will be an open and dynamic territorial and spatial planning document aligned with national sectoral policies and integrating SDGs. This plan will become a major tool for the territorial implementation and localisation of the SDGs as the basis for the country's development. This will ensure inclusive and sustainable development of Lithuanian cities and urban settlements, as well as mitigate their negative environmental impact and reduce socio-economic inequalities.

We strive to ensure that all Lithuanians, particularly those who live in urbanized areas, never lose touch with nature. Vilnius, for example, is one of the **greenest capitals** in Europe. Almost 55 percent of the city's territories are green areas. Furthermore, new **Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans** help to integrate different modes of transportation and to strive for urban planning solutions that meet the sustainability, economic growth, social equity, health and environmental requirements.

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Innovation in the public, private and academic sectors is key in fostering a good living environment and ensuring environmental responsibility. In Lithuania, innovative technologies, particularly in the areas of biotechnology and laser technology, contribute to the creation of sustainable production and consumption patterns, the transition towards a circular economy and the development of modern energy.

Lithuania encourages **companies** to use raw materials more efficiently, to optimize production processes and to reduce the amount of waste. Financial instruments have been developed to stimulate investment in cleaner production innovations, reduce the negative environmental impact of economic activity and produce new products, using waste as a resource. Lithuania is becoming a hub for young entrepreneurs to pursue their innovative and socially-conscious start-up ideas.

Lithuanians have shown that they are able to commit to sustainable solutions. A good example is a **deposit system** for single-use beverage packaging, which has quickly become a symbol of effectiveness. Since 2016, the return rate reached more than 90% – meaning that 9 out of 10 beverage containers sold in Lithuania are collected by citizens and recycled.

8th slide

In order to move towards a low carbon economy, Lithuania changes its **energy** production patterns by rapidly increasing the share of renewable energy and enhancing energy efficiency. Currently, the **energy from renewables** accounts for about a quarter of all energy used. Wind and biofuels are the most important types of renewables in Lithuania. The National Energy Strategy foresees that by 2050 renewables will become the main source of energy in all sectors, accounting for 100 percent of electricity, and for 80 percent of all energy consumption. Energy intensity of Lithuania's economy consistently decreases. We implement **energy efficiency** measures in the housing sector, by modernizing buildings. Striving for the **energy independence**, Lithuania implemented several strategic projects that diversified energy supply routes and sources, lowered the prices of energy for consumers and opened new opportunities for the development of the country. To ensure the **energy security**, Lithuania aims to fully synchronise its electricity network with continental Europe. Last month, a roadmap, which puts forward a concrete solution for the synchronisation by the target date of 2025, was signed in Brussels.

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While protecting its people, fostering sustainable cities and establishing an innovative economy, Lithuania has never forgotten the foundation of all these things – the **environment**. Good environmental status and access to outdoor activities are important elements of citizens' wellbeing. Lithuania has made great progress to improve water and waste management and preserve natural resources. We have been performing well on international environmental indexes. Yet, with the globally growing threats of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, it is important that the protection of the environment receives even more attention.

Water is our most precious and vital natural resource. In Lithuania, we have an abundance of water and high-quality drinking water is supplied only from **underground sources**. Well-developed drinking water supply and wastewater treatment infrastructure and services make a significant contribution to the quality of life and the protection of the environment. In 2016, the centralised drinking water supply served 82 percent of the Lithuanian population, while wastewater from 74 percent of the population was collected by centralised sewer systems. Lithuania aims to increase the compliance of public **drinking water** with safety and quality requirements from current 90 up to 100 percent by 2030. Modern **wastewater treatment** plants have greatly reduced the amount of nitrogen, phosphorus and other organic ~~pollutants, that~~ pollutants that cause the blooming of surface water bodies.

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Lithuania seeks to sustain stability of **ecosystems**, restore them and improve the quality of ecosystem services. We preserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable use of natural resources. The system of **protected areas**, which was created for the conservation of landscapes and biodiversity, constitutes almost 18% of the country's land area; most of it is attributed to the European ecological network Natura 2000. **Forest** land covers more than a third of Lithuania's territory and steadily increases. Sustainable forest use in Lithuania ensures the conservation of high nature value forests. All state forests and many private forests are certified according to the FSC system, which confirms that forests are managed in accordance with generally recognized principles of sustainable forest

management. Reorganization of state **forest management** into one state company helps to further increase the economic efficiency, competitiveness and sustainability of forestry in Lithuania.

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Despite the national challenges, Lithuania has highlighted **development cooperation** as one of its priorities.

Lithuania's **Official Development Assistance** steadily increases. *[Lithuania strives to achieve a target of 0.33% ODA/GNI ratio by 2030 in line with international commitments. Two years ago, Lithuania adopted the Inter-Institutional Development Cooperation Action Plan for 2017–2019 with the aim to increase the official development assistance and contribute to the effective and coherent implementation of Agenda 2030 in partner countries].*

A priority in our **bilateral development cooperation** is given to the Eastern Partnership countries as well as countries of migration origin and transit. In 2015–2017 Lithuania implemented 265 development cooperation projects expanding the geography of its bilateral assistance to 24 states. Lithuania's development cooperation is focused on sharing Lithuanian best practices with the developing countries that seek democracy, develop market economy, and are on the way of integration into international structures, including the European Union. Lithuania also works on bilateral development cooperation projects that address **climate change**. We have introduced Lithuanian renewable energy technologies and encouraged the use of public funding to mobilize private sector investments in Malaysia, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Mali.

Lithuania provides **humanitarian aid** to victims of natural disasters and victims of armed conflicts in Ukraine, Syria and Iraq; to refugees in Afghanistan, Palestine and Myanmar; and to the fight against hunger and the Ebola virus.

Today, I am honoured to be sitting at the same table with **Mali's** representative(s). In recent years Lithuania has taken part in agricultural development cooperation projects in Mali. We see Mali as one of our most important partners in the African continent. *[I would also like to add that currently 39 Lithuanian military officers are deployed to the UN mission in Mali MINUSMA]*

A strong and long-term **partnership** is a fundamental cornerstone of Lithuania's development cooperation and sustainable development policy.

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Lithuania is determined to continue implementing the 2030 Agenda and benefit from opportunities offered by the SDGs. This framework provides a harmonized system, which helps to put focus on the well-being of all, ensuring that no one is left behind, while encouraging the protection of the planet.

I would like to emphasize that all of us, as a big family, share the same home, the same planet Earth, and we are all responsible for taking care of it. We cannot remain indifferent to each other, within and beyond our borders. We must create an environment we and the future generations enjoy living in. I strongly believe that the Sustainable Development Goals will help us do this together.