



ESTONIA

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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**On the occasion of the High Level Segment of the
16th Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development
New York, 16 May 2008**

**Statement by
Mr Harry Liiv, Deputy Secretary General,
Ministry of the Environment of Estonia**

Mr Chairman, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Estonia aligns itself fully with the positions of the European Union expressed by Slovenia.

Estonia shares the view that in order to achieve action-oriented outcome at the present session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and for building up concrete and meaningful base for the next policy guidance session, it is of utmost importance that all countries act in good faith and share their best practices.

Interlinkages between agriculture, land management and the natural resource base, with particular focus on water, climate change and biodiversity are of great importance in planning policies in the respective fields. In terms of land use, 29.3% of Estonia's territory consists of agricultural land, while forests cover 50.1% and swamplands account for approximately 5.1% of the territory. 16% of dry land is under protection.

Agricultural sector is one of the most intensive water consumer and in order to move towards more sustainable use of water, integration of different sectors together with application of sustainable technologies, are crucial elements. In Estonia, agricultural water consumption has been declining during last 15 years. However, that sector still plays significant role in pollution of water bodies. In order to minimize non-point pollution from agriculture, we need to apply plan of measures as part of IWRM. At the same time Estonia pays great attention to rural water supply and sanitation improvement. For example, last year Estonian Government initiated a program to enable access to safe drinking water in rural areas by drilling the bore wells.

To improve the capacity of water services at the management level in rural regions in Estonia, several regional water companies were established. Their task is to serve small municipalities for preparation of the water supply and sanitation projects and later on to operate those waterworks.

During the last 2-3 years several new regional water and sanitation projects were started, with task to construct or reconstruct more than 900 km water and wastewater pipelines and more than 100 wastewater treatment plants. With completion of those projects with total cost more than 130 million EUR, Estonia will take remarkable step towards offering up to date service for major part of small municipalities.

Mr Chairman,

Estonia has implemented number of successful initiatives and programmes in the field of agriculture with remarkable cross-sectoral benefits. Implementation of the soil fertility programme, improvement of the quality of agricultural lands as well as promotion of management of semi-natural habitats can be drawn to your attention as prominent examples. Sustainable production patterns in agriculture and organic farming have been promoted by drafting the Estonian Action Plan for Organic Farming 2007-2013. The use of environmentally-friendly methods within the economy including organic production is also encouraged alongside the measures of the Rural Development Plan 2007-2013.

Changing unsustainable consumption patterns, with a focus on food consumption and on the Marrakech process is another key challenge. Sustainable use of resources and decoupling of economic growth from the environmental and social degradation is enhanced in Estonia by supporting appropriate technological innovations and development of research field through different action plans and programmes. In order to reinforce economic aspect of sustainable development Estonia initiated the elaboration of new economic and regulatory instruments including ecological taxation.

The priorities of green and sustainable public procurements for 2007-2009 have been determined in Estonia to better employ environmentally sustainable principles, change unsustainable production and consumption patterns and enhance the synergy between environmental sustainability and economic competitiveness. The general goal is to expand the market of environmentally clean and healthy products, encourage operators' sustainable product development and enable innovation in the adoption of environmental technologies.

Finally, I would emphasize that cross-sectoral integration is a key for promoting sustainable development and the multi-stakeholder open approach in all phases of decision-making together with involvement of local authorities and NGOs. Estonian National Strategy on Sustainable Development, which is an integral conception clearly focused on the sustainability of long-term development of the Estonian state and society until the year 2030 could be seen as example worth to share with interested parties.

It is essential to design and implement incentives, both on national as well as international levels, with the aim to promote secure, efficient, transparent and competitive markets for agricultural products while reducing at the same time energy and water related environmental and social problems, in particular those related to climate change and air pollution.

To conclude, Estonia believes that coordinated global actions and goal-oriented implementation of agreed global targets supports national efforts and sends positive signal to the regional level, which in turn add value to the global sustainable development.

Thank you for your attention.