

Mr Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We cannot deny that climate change is happening. Millions of people already feel the impact of human-induced climate change. For decades, we have pursued economic growth, creating a dangerous tension between growth and environmental protection. Finding a balance between them is a serious challenge, as is reaching an agreement on how to achieve it. Time is working against us. Soon we shall not be able to restore the balance, no matter how high our GDP growth rate is. Therefore we must act, and we must do it now. We have to do it together. We have to be flexible and determined.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The recent UN Conference on Small Island Developing States in Samoa confirmed the urgency to take action globally. It is especially small island developing countries that are on the frontline of climate change. As President Tong of Kiribati has rightly outlined: they are "the early warning system" for other nations.

The accelerating rise of sea levels, the degradation of coastal and marine ecosystems is threatening the very survival of these nations. Climate change also puts SIDS countries' ability to achieve sustainable development goals at risk; it adds additional burdens to their national budgets.

Estonia understands how serious the problem. We contributed to the small island states Conference Trust Fund; we are committed to making a long-term contribution to partnerships with SIDS countries on climate change mitigation and adaptation, by strengthening ICT connectivity and infrastructure. Altogether Estonia allocated 3 million euros during the period 2010-2012 to fund projects addressing climate change.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

the agreement that will be delivered at the Paris Climate Conference should promote climate-resilient and sustainable development. It should facilitate our adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change. It should also encourage the highest level of ambition by all countries, in a way that is fair, efficient and transparent. Estonia is fully committed to entering into the negotiations whose goal will be to conclude a new climate agreement.

All Parties must come forward with their intended nationally determined contributions and follow the timetable agreed to at the Warsaw Climate Conference. The EU stands ready to come forward with their contributions in the first quarter of 2015, and we call on all other major economies, and other Parties ready to do so, to follow the same timetable.

The European Union will achieve greater emission reductions than required by its targets by 2020. Economic growth need not come at the expense of the environment. Estonia has successfully combined those two goals. We have made remarkable progress since 1990: while real GDP doubled, cut our carbon dioxide emissions by half.

In the last few years, Estonia has been an example for others – we have invested 400 million euros in climate change mitigation projects, more than 2 per cent of our annual GDP. We are on track, even ahead of it, with our renewables and energy efficiency commitments. We now look toward the next areas of interest; transport and resource efficiency in industry. Our climate policy has had significant co-benefits. Today, according to WHO, Estonia has the world's cleanest air. Renovated houses have not only saved 30% on average in CO<sub>2</sub>, they also have cut energy bills significantly. If a small nation with limited resources can do this, the same also should be possible for larger and wealthier countries.

Thirty-eight countries, including EU member states, have taken on legally binding commitments for the second Kyoto Protocol period. Unfortunately this only covers 14% of all global emissions. The prerequisite for effective climate action is that all Parties contribute. I look forward to a discussion on how all Parties can work together to increase those ambitions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

if we act together, at the global level, we can achieve the 2°C objective. And we can promote sustainable economic growth. The positive side effects will be improved air quality and human health, better energy security and resilience, improve ecosystems and sufficient natural resources. We do not need a fatal world-wide environmental shock to understand the gravity of climate change.