

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to address the UN General Assembly. This year, I shall focus on three pressing global matters: the progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, promoting peace and security, and humanitarian affairs.

First, the MDGs. During the first decade of this Millennium the MDGs have triggered a level of global commitment and wide-ranging partnership that the world has never seen before. Along the way, there have been setbacks, of course. One thing, however, is certain: achieving the MDGs is an attainable reality with concrete targets and deadlines.

We have set a clear goal but we must keep in mind that we shall reach our objective only if we share the weight of responsibility and all of us pull in the same direction. The political will expressed by a majority of stakeholders at the recent MDG Summit and in its outcome document needs to be implemented promptly, in accordance with the agreed action agenda. Only five years, after all, remain. Estonia is ready to provide continuous contributions to the success of our common endeavour.

Estonia contributes towards the achievement of MDGs through focused development cooperation policy and respective activities in our main partner countries, one of which is Afghanistan. Alongside with providing security through ISAF, we are carrying out long-term health care and education projects in Helmand province. We also offer our best practices in establishing standards of good governance, including the creation of an electronic voting system for the newly elected parliament.

Estonia supports the transition process, including the gradual transfer of security responsibilities to the Afghan authorities. This process should be term-based and irreversible, carried out according to the agreement reached at the ISAF meeting in Tallinn last April. Ownership of the

process on the part of the Afghan government is crucial in taking forward its pledge made at the Kabul Conference with regard to strengthening the electoral framework. This, along with the endorsed reform agenda demonstrates the Afghans' desire to develop their nation.

For my country, Estonia, the development of ICT has been a crucial engine of economic development and modernisation throughout last 20 years. This is why today our experts advise governments on ICT solutions in many parts of the world. In cooperation with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Open Society Institute, we have established a special academy to assist governments in developing countries with advice and training in electronic governance and the use of ICT in public services. I am convinced that the more successful we are in reducing the digital gap, the more accelerated and more sustainable overall economic progress will be.

Mr. President, I commend UN efforts in paving the way towards a more efficient operational system, especially the long-awaited outcome of the four-year system-wide coherence negotiations. The consensus agreement on establishing the Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) will serve as an extra boost for meeting the development goals as the implications of gender inequality affect all MDGs.

Estonia contributes to the achievement of millennium goals through respective UN agencies, funds and programs and we pledge our support to the UN Women as well.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the UN Charter was signed 65 years ago, the UN has stood for global peace and security. The UN peacekeeping budget has increased more than 15-fold since 1991. It is difficult to imagine the situation in major crisis areas such as Sudan, DRC and other places, without the active, multifaceted engagement of the UN. With its 15 military and 12 political operations, however, the UN's peacekeeping force is clearly stretched thin. We need further reforms to contribute to advancing the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations, as well as encourage regional actors to assume a stronger role. Estonia contributes to UN peacekeeping budget at a voluntarily enhanced rate. We have done this for 10 years now and will continue to do so.

The credibility of the UN in the promotion of peace and security rests on the commitment of all

Member States. We equally share the responsibility to apply the principles enshrined in the Charter, including refraining from any threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

Estonia reiterates its firm support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, security and stability of Georgia, based on full adherence to international law. For the peaceful resolution of this drawn-out conflict, it is necessary to continue with the Geneva talks in their initial format. Humanitarian issues, in particular ensuring the safe and dignified return of refugees and IDPs, and wider access to the conflict zone, especially for humanitarian workers and international observers, need to be seriously addressed now. Furthermore, the free movement of people living within the internationally recognised borders of Georgia must be ensured.

Without justice efforts to ensure sustainable peace might easily be wiped out. I would like, therefore, to emphasize the adoption by consensus of a package of amendments on the crime of aggression by the Review Conference of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in June. Estonia strongly supports international criminal justice, in which an independent and effective International Criminal Court plays a central role.

It is also of crucial importance to support the activities of the ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia) during its final years of existence. Estonia is doing its share with respect to the enforcement of sentences.

Confronting the security challenges of the 21st century depends on successful cooperation among all states, international and regional organisations. In this regard, facing down cyber threats is no exception. Estonia urges broad cross-border and cross-sector capacity-building in protecting critical information infrastructures, whose importance was highlighted in the report of the UN Group of Experts on ICT developments. The necessity of closer cooperation among states, between the private sector and civil society, is critical when we realize that in case of a cyber attack, all traditional security measures may be rendered useless. I can assure you that all-encompassing preparedness will pay off when a real crisis strikes.

Mr. President,

Estonia remains actively engaged in areas where our contribution can make a difference,

particularly in humanitarian affairs and human rights issues.

In this context I would like to note the 10th anniversary of the Security Council resolution 1325 on “Women, Peace and Security”, which must be a stepping stone towards further action at the UN, regional and national levels. Establishing operational guidelines for the protection of women and girls, strengthening accountability mechanisms as well as enhancing women’s participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict peace-building should be part of these efforts. To this end, Estonia is finalising a national action plan to enhance our activities.

Estonia is a strong and principled advocate human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of expression. Estonia supports the strengthening of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and its capacity to promote and protect human rights around the world. We aspire to join the HRC in 2012.

Estonia has also continuously increased its contribution to United Nations’ humanitarian activities both through work in the field as well as financially. The UN’s coordination capability was crucial most recently in Pakistan and in the beginning of the year, saving lives in Haiti, where Estonian logistics experts have been supporting the UN activities for more than six months now. Our experience has made clear the need for more combined efforts in securing the link between relief efforts and development work.

Estonia is concerned about increasingly frequent violations of humanitarian principles in conflict zones. Alas, humanitarian emblems and flags no longer provide the shield of protection they used to. We must step up our efforts and press for increased security for humanitarian aid workers. After all, it is the responsibility of governments to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel working on their territory.

The effectiveness of humanitarian aid, as well as upholding good humanitarian principles, is another concern of ours. Advocating these principles was one of the activities Estonia pursued during our recent co-chairmanship of the UN’s Good Humanitarian Donorship Group.

Finally I would like to underline one simple truth - the United Nations, like any other organisation, is only as strong and effective as the political will and commitment of its members. Big or small, we all bear responsibility. As a member of the European Union, Estonia firmly

believes that the Lisbon Treaty fundamentally enhances the ability of the Union to be a significant global actor, securing peace, stability and prosperity for all. With our shared commitment I expect the vital and prominent role of the United Nations in the global arena to be further reinforced.

Thank you.