

Fellow countrymen, mothers and grandmothers throughout the country, children and parents everywhere,

Today is a day that recognises and honours a part of our lives of which there is quite possibly none greater nor more personal: that with which we all, innately, have an unbreakable bond.

Mother's Day.

Without further ado, let me wish all mothers eternal thanks, endless embraces and all the flowers you could wish for! My mother. All of the mothers here today. All mothers, everywhere.

Let me wish them, too, good health and unwavering resolve. Such wishes never go amiss.

We talk a lot of the hugely important role that mothers play in our lives, and of the responsibility they shoulder.

Mothers make important decisions about their children's education.

Mothers set the rules at home, and instil values in their children.

Mothers make sure that everyone in the family is healthy, and encourage their children to exercise and play sport.

And it is usually mothers who children come to seeking solace, to take their pain away, and to make them feel safe and secure.

The question I would like to put to you today is this: given that we ask so much of our mothers, do we really give them the authority and the opportunities they need to be able to cope with those demands?

The simple but precise answer to that question is to be found in another: are mothers, and women generally, being granted sufficient decision-making rights in the way we organise our lives today?

As mothers and as women, are they sufficiently able to influence decisions that not only affect society, but women and mothers themselves and their quality of life?

I'm rather afraid that they're not. And I don't understand why.

On the one hand, Estonia has done quite a lot to spare its citizens the production line and waiting room of bureaucracy. Being able to coordinate much of our lives online grants us the freedom to rethink work as a concept, how and where we do it, and how much time we spend on it.

And yet, are we truly making optimum use of these opportunities? Perhaps we should review the way we regulate working relations to see whether they actually enable new ways of working to be implemented.

You may be wondering why I'm asking this, particularly here today.

I'm asking because when work leaves its traditional workplace, the first place it arrives at is home.

This has its good and bad points. For women, and in particular mothers, this freedom should

give them the chance to participate in working life far more flexibly and, indeed, beneficially. At the same time, a home should remain a home.

And then there's housework. I appeal to men, fathers and sons, everywhere: dedicate even an extra half-hour a week to housework to even out the imbalance.

Sharing the load will ease the pressure on your partner or parent, and on your family relationships generally.

Men of Estonia, fathers and sons alike, without wishing to dwell on the issue of gender equality, I would simply ask you: what makes us, as men, think that women, who make all of the key decisions at home about raising our children and running our day-to-day lives, should be any less capable of making key decisions in work-related matters?

Moreover, how long will we endure a situation in which talk of gender equality and uniform salaries incites a superciliousness and unwillingness to properly discuss the issue – and why do we endure it at all?

The dyed-in-the-wool common sense people tend to refer to on such occasions should, after all, provide us with solutions that are the most beneficial to our families and to the way we live in the longer term – which is to say to the country and nation as a whole.

The fact that women are paid less for doing the same jobs with the same level of responsibility as men is something that studies have proven. This is not a quirk of nature of which there is no fixing. It is not something we can do nothing about: it is a situation we can rectify.

The fact that women's responsibilities before their families and children are taken into account at some point when analysing their career options has also been proven.

Regrettably, children are still viewed as a 'risk': something that could harm the interests of a

company and its operations.

Not that I'm looking to apportion blame here. I would simply point out, with a sternness directed equally at both sexes, that holding women back on the career and salary ladder is not an accusation that can be levelled solely at male bosses and men generally.

But I'm glad that dissent and dissatisfaction over this issue are growing. I'm glad that more and more such questions are being asked. Discussion of the issue is useful, and very much needed.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear mothers,

My manner today may seem rather serious; perhaps excessively so, in this sea of flowers, and given the occasion. But just think about those flowers: when we talk to them, we use the language of feelings, of emotions. And that, today, is what is most important.

But here in our country, in the home of our nation, we need to talk about these issues, talk about them properly, and make decisions. And the discussion is one we need to have with mothers, not about them.

We must aim to reach a point where a mother's role is not confined to the four walls of the family home. For if we erect such a boundary, we lose out enormously in terms of quality of life and improving it.

Mothers should be happy to live in Estonia, and Estonia should be a place in which mothering is much more at the forefront of things.

Let me again wish you all not only a happy Mother's Day, but happiness every day.

Thank you.