



**Address by H. E. Toomas Hendrik Ilves
President of Estonia
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Check against delivery!

Mr President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor once again to address the United Nations. This year I would like to focus on responsibility. Recent years of economic and financial turbulence have demonstrated a strong correlation between economic prudence and responsibility in fiscal matters. We have realized, I hope, that sustainability is not a term we apply to development but concerns all of us. Responsibility and sustainability apply to the three broad topics I shall address today: human rights, good governance, and development.

Diplomacy is to prevent war. When diplomats are attacked we are all less secure. We know what we are talking about: we too have had our diplomats attacked, mercifully without the horrific consequences as in Benghazi. Therefore the recent assaults in many parts of the world on diplomats, embassies and consular premises are deplorable. Regardless of their motivations such acts are unjustifiable and must be universally and unequivocally condemned. All countries must fulfil their international legal obligation to protect diplomatic and consular properties and personnel.

Mr President,

As recent events have demonstrated, when it comes to human rights, it is not enough merely to keep your own house in order. As a conscientious member of the international community, Estonia feels the responsibility to do more globally. This includes paying attention to human rights' violations in places torn by conflict, as well as doing more to stop and prevent violation of rights of women and the child. It also means making the most of new technologies in the service of fundamental rights and freedoms. The need to take responsibility and to do more is also why Estonia looks forward to become a member of the Human Rights Council and to work proactively towards the fulfilment of its mandate.

Permit me to touch upon developments in Syria. We have witnessed the complete breakdown of any semblance of the rule of law. We continue to see extensive human rights and international humanitarian law abuses. It appears that both sides have committed serious international crimes. Yet we still see no solution. We cannot look on and wait for the violence to spread even more widely. The Security Council – especially its permanent members – must overcome their differences and find a solution to this bloodshed. The least that all parties must do is to allow for humanitarian aid to be safely delivered and to guarantee the security of humanitarian workers. Without an end to the armed conflict, without peace, there can be no political process.

But it is not only Syria that needs our attention. We should not avoid the problem of protracted conflicts waiting to be solved already for years. We shall speak with one voice against continuing violations of territorial integrity of sovereign states and secure return of all forcefully displaced persons. Moreover, more attention to conflict prevention would help to avoid such violations in the future.

Mr President,

A stronger commitment to conflict prevention and to the enhancement of the rule of law can help to avoid violent conflicts and the most heinous international crimes. Under the principle of the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) states committed in 2005 to protect their people from ethnic cleansing, genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Today the content of

RtoP is not debated. The difficulty, however, lies with its application: when governments do not live up to their responsibility, the international community must react. And act.

The international criminal justice system, especially the International Criminal Court, plays a crucial role in providing timely and decisive responses to such crimes. Investigations by the Court may deter further atrocities, prevent their escalation or accelerate their end. Therefore it is essential to cooperate with the Court and apprehend those it has indicted.

As a result of the evolving nature of military conflicts, civilian casualties tragically are on the rise. Among civilians women and children are the most vulnerable. When we take this into account, resolution 1325 – “Women, peace and security” – takes on a whole new immediacy. Furthermore, conflict-related sexual violence requires more attention. Such violence can easily lead to further war crimes and crimes against humanity. Moreover, in advancing rights of the child, the International Criminal Court’s recent decision to convict Thomas Lubanga was a significant achievement and will, we hope, have a strong deterrent effect in the future to prevent crimes against children.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Crimean War in the 1850s brought the world the first extensive photographic reports of conflicts. Today, new media make it even more difficult to hide war crimes both on and off the battlefield. Modern technology brings home the reality and horror of war.

Therefore, we must recognize the important role of the technology in advancing human rights.

Freedom of expression is a human right whether in the city square, the press or in cyber space. For the third year in a row, Estonia ranks first in Internet freedom. We joined the “Coalition Freedom Online,” a group of states working closely together to advance human rights online. In addition, Estonia looks forward to discuss actively matters relating to Internet freedom in the Human Rights Council, which adopted a resolution on this topic this year. It was a genuine milestone, affirming that fundamental rights in the virtual world must be protected with the same commitment as in the “real”.

Internationally, there are worrisome developments related to the Internet governance. Too many countries speak about the dangers of a free Internet from a security perspective. The truth is that cyber security is needed to prevent oppressive governments and criminals wreaking havoc. It is not to prevent peaceful individuals from speaking their minds or gathering information and exchanging ideas.

Despite having experienced extensive cyber attacks – the so-called Web War One – five years ago, Estonia does not support more rigid regulation and censorship in cyber-space. Estonia is committed to an open, secure and reliable Internet. It is therefore imperative to ensure that the International Telecommunication Union's new regulation does not lead to the restriction of Internet freedom, to unnecessary limits to the free flow of ideas and information. In fighting cyber crimes the Budapest Convention provides the appropriate and primary legal framework at the global level.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Globally, there is a deficit of good and responsible governance. Its lack is the root cause of countless other ills. But again, some progress has been made. I was proud to represent Estonia when I signed up to the Open Government Partnership, along with 42 other countries. This multilateral initiative aims to take concrete steps to institute a new model of governance, to maximize the potential of new technologies and to tackle corruption.

The information revolution we experience these days has assisted Estonia successfully and rapidly transform itself into a rule of law based democratic society. Estonia was the first country where people could cast their vote also online in parliamentary and municipal elections. Just a few months ago we conducted our census for the first time to a large extent online. This year over ninety percent of taxpayers in Estonia filed annual income tax returns via the Internet. E-government, E-school, E-medical prescriptions and E-parking are examples of Estonian innovation in the field of citizen-friendly public services. They increase transparency and help to prevent and cut down corruption. And they reduce costs. Most importantly, however, they have increased the possibility to exercise fundamental

rights and freedoms and improve inclusive and responsible governance. Therefore Estonia wishes to share its E-governance skills and to continue to facilitate exchanges with partners worldwide.

My comments on the need to do more go for the UN too. Without reform its global mission will be unsustainable. We need change. Ranging from reforming of UN in the broadest sense to cutting the wasting of paper by the same system on the other. In an information-age it is increasingly necessary to distinguish noise from signal, genuine data from spin.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have spoken thus far about what governments can and must do. In our increasingly interconnected, wired and wireless world civil society and the private sector play an ever greater role. Governments benefit from involving NGOs, entrepreneurs and private individuals in governance. Estonia and many other countries increasingly, and successfully, do so. The challenge, however, is for the UN system, a multilateral organization based on modern, post-Westphalian states, to embrace these other actors and to involve them in finding solutions and decision-making.

Mr President,

Allow me to continue by sharing some thoughts related to development and responsibility. Sustainable development is not a clichéd utopia. Nor is it something forced on us from above. True development can be nothing other than sustainable. Yet we've seen *un-*sustainability masked as development, despite the contradiction in terms.

Consider the global financial crisis. Burdening our children and grandchildren with mountains of debt is immoral, as is living at the expense of others. Growth without responsibility is illusory. We have learned this the hard way. Let's not make the same mistake again.

We are another year closer to the deadline we set ourselves for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Were they too ambitious? I don't think so. Aiming high is the least we can do. There is no point in setting targets that we can be confident of achieving effortlessly. Yet we must resist the temptation to "sell" everything as a success if it is not the case. Failure to achieve all the MDGs is no excuse not to set new targets. The world needs Sustainable Development Goals. We're still in a preliminary phase of the discussions. Let us aim high and do our best.

Despite the world's best efforts millions remain in poverty. The IT transformation will create massive opportunities all over the world. We must, however, avoid a digital divide that would stymie this historic chance to accelerate the development in all parts of the world. As a member of Kofi Annan's High Level Panel of Experts on the Digital divide already a decade ago, I continue to be concerned about the gap between the digital haves and have-nots. Especially because by investing in IT, countries such as mine have leapt into modernity and transparency. New information and communications technologies have the potential to trigger the next Industrial Revolution. But governments cannot achieve it all alone.

Entrepreneurs expanding the range of global knowledge networks are key partners in fighting poverty and creating a more transparent economy. They can also make an outsized difference in their communities and the world. Governments, however, must provide a secure and fruitful environment for these sorts of ideas to emerge and prosper. Twenty-one years after restoring our independence, Estonia is an example where a combination of responsible free enterprise, E-governance, international partnerships and eco-friendly policies, can put you in the fast lane of development.

Mr President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Experience shows that if we fail to act responsibly, we will, in the end, be forced to do so.

I thank you for your attention.