



**Address by the President of the Republic of Estonia,
Mr Toomas Hendrik Ilves
At the General Debate 68th General Assembly
*September 25, 2013***

Mr Secretary General, Mr President of General Assembly
Ladies and gentlemen,

The central theme of the 68th General Assembly is sustainable development. With its three main pillars this constitutes a comprehensive agenda, even more comprehensive with all of its prerequisites – conflict prevention; bringing peace and security to war torn countries; bringing perpetrators to justice through implementation of international law. Helping the weakest to help themselves; shaping economies that pay focused attention to social agenda and environmental issues, and that effectively use e-technologies; protecting human rights; supporting rule of law and democracy – these are all integral parts of sustainable development.

The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda notes that governments have primary responsibility for assuring sustainable development and for improving the lives of people on their territory. Sustainability can be truly implemented, however, only if we manage to bring it to the core of the thinking of governments, societies, individuals and the international community as a whole.

Let me start with what is clearly and without a doubt the most unsustainable situation in the world at the moment: the conflict in Syria. It has been repeated thousands of times and must be repeated over and over again that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable under any circumstances and requires complete and unreserved condemnation. It is clear that chemical weapons must be destroyed quickly and verifiably. Therefore the OPCW and Security Council needs to move forward and agree on the legally binding terms to resolve this issue, preferably under Chapter 7 of the Charter, and so as soon as possible.

Even without the use of chemical weapons, military actions and brutality in Syria have created suffering and humanitarian disaster of unimaginable proportions. More than 110,000 people have killed and millions of refugees and internally displaced persons are scattered around in the region. About 7 million Syrians are in urgent need of assistance.

While there is no easy and quick fix to this complex situation, we must keep doing what we can to ease human suffering. Estonia, among many other countries, has been focusing on helping those who have been forced to flee from their homes and protecting the most vulnerable members of society – women and children. I'd also like to praise the good work of UNICEF, UNHCR, OCHA and of humanitarian workers in Syria – who often by risking their own lives, have been able to organize and deliver assistance.

Evidence collected by the UN Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry indicates that war crimes, crimes against humanity and gross human rights violations have been systematically committed in Syria. Estonia was among the countries to join the Swiss initiative in January, asking the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the ICC. It is the responsibility of the international community to protect, if a government fails to do so.

In contrast, let me turn to another country and conflict, where hope has been recently restored. That presidential elections in Mali were carried out in a peaceful and transparent manner, has paved the way for optimism. The newly elected president has many important tasks ahead – starting with reconciliation between the southern and northern parts of Mali. I wish Mr Keita all the luck and energy he needs to rebuild his country, and I can assure you that Estonia stands among the countries that continue to help if needed.

I would dare to say that yet another country whose future looks promising, is Afghanistan. I believe that responsibility and ownership make people masters of their own fate and I can see the willingness of Afghans to use that opportunity. The international community must continue to assist that country to ensure that their efforts will bear fruit. As a long-term partner to Afghanistan Estonia remains committed to supporting it also after 2014, training and financing Afghan security forces, and continuing to support their educational progress, women's empowerment, rule of law and health care.

Yet on the other hand, it is sadly true that conflicts too, can at times be surprisingly sustainable – so that we become inured to the persistence of conflict. For years Estonia has underlined that protracted conflicts around Nagorno-Karabakh as well as in Georgia and Moldova must not fall off the radar screen of the international community. Without the will of all involved parties no lasting solutions can be found.

Mr President,

Every year, over half a million people die as a result of illegal or irresponsible arms transfers. Enormous amounts of money and resources are spent on arms, often at the expense of more vital needs. We see the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty in the framework of the United Nations in June as a historic milestone for the world community.

As a responsible member of the international community, Estonia strongly supports and contributes to the activities of the ICC and ad hoc tribunals created by the UN Security Council. We continue to call for more ratifications of the Rome Statute and of the Crime of Aggression amendment to the Rome Statute. Universality is key ensure that perpetrators of the worst crimes of international concern are held accountable. Accountability and the prevention of atrocity crimes have been the priorities of Estonia as a current member of the Human Rights Council. We focus there also on the rights of women and children and on their disproportionate suffering in armed conflict.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda should transform the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) into Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). In the meantime we have learnt that the MDGs should have focussed more on reaching the poorest and most excluded groups in society. The main challenge of the post 2015 negotiations will be to formulate and reach global agreement on one concrete and measurable set of development goals, which would keep the three dimensions of sustainability in its core and maintain a strong focus on poverty eradication. The targets should leave

no one behind and be applicable and achievable in every country. Women and girls, for example, are the main drivers of development in many societies. Not allowing them to fulfil their potential through education, decent job opportunities and essential health services, is to disregard the potential of half of humankind. It is also important to remember, that persons with disabilities have been one of the most excluded segments of our societies, who often have serious difficulties with access to basic social services and to decent job opportunities.

Official Development Assistance will continue to play an important role in sustainable development of many countries also in the future, but it cannot compete with the flows of international private investment, nor with the domestically mobilized resources. Therefore synergies between different sources of finance, better policies and strong national ownership are necessary.

Nonetheless, the main driver of sustainable development is inclusive and responsible policies in economics. A key enabler to foster growth is the bold use of modern ICT solutions. It is a key to better governance, access to public services, job creation, transparency, accountability and civil society participation.

This brings me to two issues of worldwide importance cyber security and internet freedom. The two are intrinsically linked and in no way incompatible. Moreover they require a multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance. Freedom of opinion and expression, online or off, is a cornerstone of every democracy and constitutes a fundamental human right. Last year the Human Rights Council, affirmed this very same principle. I am glad that the UN Group of Government Experts (UNGGE) affirmed that international law is essential in promoting an open, secure and accessible cyberspace.

In our fight against cybercrime, it is essential to raise awareness and work on prevention by everyone, from private computer users up to large critical infrastructure and cloud providers. Raising the awareness of political leaders and national governments is equally important; cybercrime may have serious consequences on national security. Still the 2001 Council of Europe's Convention on Cyber Crime - Budapest Convention - remains, this far, the only legally binding international instrument in the world that addresses cybercrime. Needless to say, the more countries accede to it, the more functional it can be.

The United Nations has had and will have a leading role in making the world sustainable. Yet governments can do and must do their own fair share. Estonia, for example, proudly continues to support the initiatives of civil society in contributing to sustainable development. About a half of the world's countries have joined our 2008 initiative "Teeme Ära – Let's Do It!", to make peoples' living environment cleaner and our planet environmentally happier.

Let us stay alert and tuned to every single detail that is hindering our common wellbeing from evolving – be it in developed or developing countries. Let us be united by this common effort.