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General Debate

Statement by the Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia

Tuesday, 19 July 2016

Speaker: Mr. Jüri Seilenthal

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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Statement by Estonia at UNCTAD XIV Ministerial Conference Nairobi, Kenya July 19, 2016

Delivered by: Mr. Jüri Seilenthal, Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia

Honoured President of UNCTAD XIV
Your Excellency the Secretary General of UNCTAD
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Estonia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union, and with the statement to be delivered by Group D.

It is a great pleasure to address the UNCTAD XIV Conference. On this occasion, I would like to express our appreciation and to congratulate Kenya for hosting this Conference.

The scene-setting agreements and outcomes from the past four years have determined the guiding principles for the trade and development agenda today. Amongst the many, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Tenth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, and foremost – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development build the framework for UNCTAD's deliverables towards its guiding set of principles called "From Decisions to Actions". As the current Conference is the first UN Ministerial conference of the post-2015 era, this vision shall represent a starting point to translate our ambitions into concrete plans of action.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me to elaborate on some of the critical topics that we shall bear in mind in order to achieve the trade and development goals in an efficient and sustainable manner. First and foremost, I would like to stress the need for clear prioritization of one's action, whether it is at national, regional or international level.

25 years ago, departing from planned economy, and passing successfully through the period of a country with economy in transition. Estonia acceded to the European Union in 2004 and belongs today amongst the high-income donor countries. This has happened to a great extent due to a very clear set of policy lines: prioritization on areas determining one's development, implementing and developing the good governance and developing a diversified market economy.

Therefore, Estonia strongly shares the view that also in UNCTAD we must prioritize. The organization shall deliver within its core mandate, which is trade and development, and within the interrelated areas of finance, technology and investment. The rest can be accomplished through cooperation with actors of the international community that are already covering these

areas. UNCTAD is best when it focuses on issues where it has the comparative advantage and the expertise of the highest level. As world leading trade and development statistics provider, as well as a leading think tank on trade and development related issues, UNCTAD's role should be refined and focused.

There is also a clear need on behalf of the recipient countries for integrated policy responses to issues arising in the areas of UNCTAD's highest expertise. However, we see, that this is not an easy task. The streams of work in UNCTAD are still often distracted by Christmas-tree approaches. Too often, the voice of the countries in most need is not heard. Inter-state cooperation, bilaterally, regionally and internationally, however, is of growing importance in a globalizing world including to address one's roles and share within the global value chains. All this shall support the advancement towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and towards the graduation from the Least Developed Countries category. Unfortunately, we know far too well, that regretfully few have graduated throughout the last decade.

Thus one shall ask what can I do to change it? As a national government, and as the international community. The correct answer shall include, *inter alia*, reinforced national policies and development strategies, adequate resource allocation for implementation, as well as the well-used principles of result-based management at all levels of the joint action advancing the development, especially of these countries in most of need.

Dear colleagues,

As the intense negotiations over the Conference Outcome Document are still ongoing, I would like to touch on some topical issues, which Estonia regards as the drivers and catalyst determinants for a successful development.

First – gender. Reinforcing the links between gender equality and empowerment of women is of critical importance today. The action we deliver shall have a clear gender marker to support the design and implementation of respective policies towards the economic rights and security, supporting equal opportunities for women. Particular focus should be given to the women's access to and control over ownership, property, credit, natural resources, and new technology.

Second – youth. The Youth Forum here, in Nairobi, brings us a clear message – governments must deliver more. Achieving sustainable economic growth requires talents, creativity, and entrepreneurial vigor of the entire population as well as supportive policies towards skills development, micro, small and medium enterprises, the capacities to innovate and absorb new technologies, the ability to produce a higher quality and a greater range of products, infrastructure and other investments. This, together with mainstreaming youth inclusiveness must be part of every national policy, especially these on education that foster active citizenship.

Third – the rise of e-commerce. Information technology and the digital economy, including electronic commerce (e-commerce), have an increasing impact on global trade and development. Further research is needed on the trade and development aspects of these issues. The strengthening of UNCTAD's work on enhancing development gains from the digital economy and e-commerce through policy analysis, national ICT policy reviews, capacity-building in the area of e-commerce legislation and improving access to data and statistics on the information economy to assess policies and measure impact, is of high importance.

We shall do more to assist developing countries, in particular LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDs to address the challenges and opportunities in relation to the use of the internet and e-commerce to develop their international trade capacities.

In this regard – Estonia fully welcomes the launch of the e-Trade for All initiative yesterday here, in Nairobi. The seven key policy areas for action linked to e-commerce were identified. Estonia is among the founding partners and is ready to offer its world leading expertise and tailor-made solutions on e-governance, inter alia the e-residency program, to continue to support the developing countries.

Dear friends in UNCTAD,

To conclude, I hereby pledge, that Estonia is and remains fully committed to the success of UNCTAD's work to support the achieving of the Sustainable Development for all. We shall support our developing partners in order to able to welcome the new qualities when we meet at UNCTAD XV in four years from now.

Thank you for your attention.