



Statement by Mr Ado Lõhmus, Deputy Minister of Environment of Estonia
General Debate of the High Level Political Forum
New York, 19 July, 2017

Excellences, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for Estonia to share our thoughts with you on actions towards sustainability. I want you to leave here with three main messages – the importance of innovation, transparency and digital society.

Estonia aligns itself with the European Union statement. For the next 6 months, Estonia holds the Presidency of the European Union Council. For this, we have set our priorities – an open and innovative economy, a safe and secure environment, digital solutions and free movement of data, and an inclusive and sustainable development.

Firstly, we need to rethink how we produce and consume in an eco-innovative manner. We want to see materials in circular use and smart and innovative solutions that sustain the environment. Eco-innovation is especially important for plastics.

Secondly, product transparency. Consumers and producers need reliable and sufficient information about material content - for example earth metals, type of plastics, chemicals. Open information about chemicals in products is necessary for phasing out hazardous substances to reduce the negative impact on health and the environment and to plan the recycling of the material. So we call for open information for products.

Thirdly, as working towards a digital society, Estonia believes that ICT enables innovative approaches for collaboration in all stages of the global value chains and for open access to data.

Estonia is a global leader in e-government operations. Every Estonian has a state issued digital identity for all government services, identification and to provide digital signatures. This benefits all people with equal access to social, health, schooling and business services.

Smart e-solutions are not limited by physical borders. This enables impact and collaboration at a global scale and has a positive impact on worklife balance by giving men and women more opportunities to work from home. This contributes to gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

As a conclusion, I would like make an example of the global textile value chain. The textile sector has the scale of a 3 trillion dollar economy per year. And it faces challenges in pollution and resource intensity.

Microfibers from textiles end up in marine. 3 kilogrammes of chemicals are used on average to produce 1 kilogramme of fabric for a T-shirt. 75% of the workforce in

textile industry is women who can be influenced by chemicals and also work conditions. And textile is something close to every person here.

Pollution is also the theme for the Third United Nations Environmental Assembly taking place in December this year. I hope for ambitious and solution-oriented outcomes from the assembly.

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

Within these 3 minutes of this speech, you all could have already filed taxes, started a business or applied for e-residency in Estonia. After all, there will be no successful future without an effective present. On the other hand, within 3 minutes, half a million of clothing items were purchased and we could have avoided 40 tonnes of plastic flow into the ocean. So let us take action.