

Check against delivery

PERMANENT MISSION OF ESTONIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS



**55th Session of the UN Commission on the
Status of Women
General Discussion - Statement by Estonia**

New York

28 February 2011



PERMANENT MISSION OF ESTONIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS



General Discussion - Statement by Estonia
Status of Women
55th Session of the UN Commission on the

New York
18 February 2011

55th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women
General Discussion - Statement by Estonia

Mister Chair, distinguished members of delegations and the civil society,

Estonia aligns itself with the strong message conveyed in behalf of the European Union and would like to offer the following comments on international capacity focusing on the development of gender equality in Estonia and at the international level.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women occupy a prominent place in our national and international agenda. The equality of women and men as enshrined in our Constitution has become an underlying principle for every legislative decision and policy implementation. In line with the 2004 Gender Equality Act we are committed to work to ensure gender equality in all our actions – from education to employment and to pursue gender equality through specific means, as, for example in information and awareness raising campaigns for young people, job seekers and other specific groups. We are not there yet and thus we need to address the most critical aspects of gender inequality: discrimination, inequality and awareness on gender equality of women and men, girls and boys. The Estonian Gender Equality Monitor conducted in 2010 indicated that men and women have positive attitudes towards gender equality, but gender stereotypes persist in society. That becomes obvious when looking at respondents' understandings on educating boys and girls where traditional gender roles are highlighted. The outcome of the survey facilitates the fight against stereotyping as it shows explicitly where there is a need for work to be done. In our case, we have for example work to do on social institutions for the TVET education which recommends not separating classes based on gender.

2010 witnessed a number of concrete steps to advance gender equality: the development plan for the reduction of violence foresees a number of actions over the next five years including raising individuals' awareness of their rights, regular mapping of nature and scope of domestic violence, development of services of victims of domestic violence and training specialists working with both victims and abusers. The self-empowerment training for adolescent girls conducted for the first time in 2010 is one and a positive received example of the plan's implementation.

Equal access to education, training, science and technology and employment remains a foundation for equality, but undoubtedly also development in a contemporary society. Estonia has a very high rate of internet users and a developed network of internet based services: public and private, and I am glad to note that the gender divide among our internet users is practically non-existent. Women use internet and ICT as much as men do. Estonia also has a relatively high proportion of women involved in the education sector. Though there are more women among university graduates in Estonia, this proportion is not reflected in the levels of pay. We have therefore commissioned a thorough study and are developing steps to reduce the gender pay gap in Estonia.

Mister Chair,

the following significant development over the past year which we
should highlight. First, we believe that the establishment of a consolidated, strong gender
entity UN Women presents us with an opportunity to enhance the UN work for gender
equality, promote its inclusion in the UN development and human rights
and ensure accountability for these efforts. It was a goal that Estonia considered crucial to
contribute to in 2010 and we will continue our efforts so that the many expectations related to
UNW became a reality. Our continued contributions to UN Women as well as UNFPA and
OHCHR are a part of these efforts. They reflect the focus on gender equality and the
improvement of the situation of women in Estonia's development cooperation and human
rights activities.

October 2010 also posed an opportunity to reaffirm our efforts to ensure the inclusion of the
gender perspective in the work of women in peace and security processes
in line with UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security.
Estonia strongly supported the adoption of resolution 1960(2010) on sexual violence
and its implementation mechanisms it created. The
issues on the agenda of this session – women's access to education and development are also
important to the success of our peace building and reconstruction process. Estonia's
national action plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 was adopted in 2010, enhancing
and strengthening our efforts to advance gender equality in conflict solution and post-conflict
reconstruction. On this basis, Estonia will continue, for instance, its development cooperation
to increase access to health and education in demand, Afghanistan.

Mister Chair,

Estonia has the honour to become, for the first time, a member of this distinguished
commission next week. The opening of its 16th session is for us a serious commitment to
increase our efforts for the promotion of gender equality, both nationally and
internationally.

Thank you.

Mister Chair