



Address by the President of the Republic of Estonia Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves  
to the UN Summit on Climate Change in New York, September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2009

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

Let me first thank you and your team for your dedication in bringing one of the most pressing concern of our time - climate change - into the global spotlight.

People on Earth have always been dependent on the powers of nature, especially here in the North. As I witness the leaves on the trees changing their colours around my residence here in Tallinn, the first signs of the coming winter are already in the air. The energy we gather during our short summer, helps us through the long and dark winter. In my country, energy is not about powerful industry or fancy cars, but about survival. It is an issue that concerns everyone. Scarce energy resources have taught us to manage energy cautiously and climate-consciously.

I am pleased to say that here in Estonia we have already managed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by eight per cent in accordance with the Kyoto Protocol. However, the actual reduction compared to 1990 levels has been as extensive as nearly 50 per cent, and we are committed to an even greater reduction. As an essential part of cutting greenhouse gas emissions, we foresee the wider use of renewable energy in Estonia, particularly biomass and wind energy.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no doubt that tackling climate change is our common responsibility. As global warming affects all living creatures on our planet, urgent and united human efforts are needed. Therefore I am pleased to note that under the leadership of the United Nations, the Kyoto process continues and the new global climate agreement is well under way.

I sincerely hope that the new framework allows for the most widespread participation possible, paving the way for other countries to follow the ambitious climate policy of the European Union. I am convinced that the new agreement must be ambitious by nature and to achieve the goal of less than two degrees Celsius temperature increase, it should include two main elements. First, both industrial countries and advanced developing countries have to make binding commitments. Secondly, the wealthier countries have to encourage the others to adopt and implement low-carbon development strategies and provide financial and technical support for doing so.

Another concern is that without an ambitious global agreement the pressure to pursue climate-friendly policies will be lessened. In facing the global financial downturn, I encourage you to look at an ambitious climate policy rather as an opportunity to develop greener technologies. Here as well, we have to seize the momentum and turn today's downturn into tomorrow's advantage.

The expectations of the international community are continuously growing before this coming December in anticipation of the global climate deal to be agreed upon. During the same time here in Estonia, we are hoping for a white Christmas. Unfortunately, recently it has happened on far too many occasions that any snow

melts right before the winter holidays. Thinking about this unpleasant illustration of climate change, I dare to hope that the Copenhagen deal will come to stay, surviving many cold winters to come.

Thank you!