



ESTONIA

ADDRESS BY

H.E. MR. TOOMAS HENDRIK ILVES

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA

TO THE 63RD SESSION

OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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**Mr President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann, upon your assumption of the office of President of the General Assembly, and I wish you success in your new responsibilities and endeavours. I also wish to express my appreciation and respect for your predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for his effective leadership during the 62nd Session of the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

I would like to speak today about the following three issues: the Millennium Development Goals and the prospects for realizing them; natural disasters and humanitarian assistance; and the war between Georgia and Russia, along with some of the conclusions that can be drawn from it.

To begin with, the Millennium Development Goals: let us bear in mind that over half of time originally allotted for achieving these Goals is already behind us. Yet have we actually reached half our goals? As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reported here 20 days ago there are reasons to doubt this. Some achievements can be regarded as noteworthy progress -- for example, greater access to education, a marked reduction in infant mortality, debt relief for developing countries, an increase in access to information and communication technology for people in developing countries, etc. We have also made certain progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

At the same time, however, progress in the spheres of trade and development cooperation has been modest. From the Secretary-General's report it is clear that although the donor states have increased their official development aid, the actual flow of financial assistance, in the course of the last two years, has actually decreased.

The European Union, of which Estonia is a member, is, as a whole, on track towards increasing its development aid to 0.7% of its gross national product, the objective agreed at the UN. Estonia has steadily increased its share among international donors - our development aid has grown fourfold since 2004.

In addition to the actual decrease in development aid, we suffered a serious setback when the Doha round of trade negotiations stalled, where the main theme has been a more efficient integration of developing countries into a world trading system based upon equality and regulations.

I would like to bring forth several of positions, based upon matters of principle that Estonia regards as being essential, and which are also part of the Millennium Summit Declaration.

First, every nation is itself primarily responsible for its own development. So as to ensure their proper development, developing countries must strengthen their administrative infrastructure and capacity, intensify their fight against corruption, and

put their economic environment in order. This is the only way to create conditions suitable for an efficient mode of transferring development aid and for increasing the benefits of the aid received. High levels of corruption, inefficient administrative capacity and an unresponsive economic climate make it difficult for donor nation public opinion to support increases in development aid. In a word, our electorates (I am speaking of course here of democratic countries with free and fair elections) do not understand why their taxes are spent this way.

Secondly, donor states and organisations can enhance the effectiveness of development cooperation by mutually coordinating and standardising the procedures involved in development cooperation.

Finally, I would like to stress that Estonia strongly supports British Prime Minister Gordon Brown's and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's initiative, the Millennium Development Goals Call to Action. The objective is to inform the general public of the importance of fulfilling the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals programme. This year, Estonia also joined this initiative. I personally hope that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was right when he said that "the MDGs are still achievable if we act now".

Mr. President,

The second Wednesday of October is International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction. As opposed to the fight against poverty or diseases, we cannot, of course, set objectives for ourselves that can be expressed in monetary amounts. We can, however, formulate and implement measures that can help to minimise the dangers and threats to people and their property, to avoid or reduce possible destruction to physical infrastructure and environment. Thus, we can limit losses, and alleviate peoples' suffering. This, in turn, can prevent social and economic convulsions that natural catastrophes have on repeated occasions triggered throughout history.

In the case of humanitarian catastrophes, be they natural or man-made disasters, it is of utmost importance that help arrive on the scene as quickly as possible, and that the access of humanitarian experts be ensured, regardless of their nationality or the state or organisation that they represent. Unfortunately, there have recently been a number of occasions where various countries have permitted help from abroad only under very specific conditions. As a result of such policies, it is the weakest and the most vulnerable, who suffer most.

Mr. President,

As I said earlier, I would like to talk about recent and ongoing events in the Southern Caucasus, specifically, the military conflict between Georgia and Russia. There are a series of complex issues involved, but here at the General Assembly I would like to raise one fundamental question -- what do these events mean for us, the United Nations?

To begin with, we must realise that the principles governing relations between states have been seriously damaged. It is regrettable in the extreme that the UN's basic principles, as enshrined in the Charter, such as the unacceptability of threatening with

use of force, or actual aggression against a nation's territorial integrity, were grossly and grotesquely violated. These principles must be, and must remain, the bases for the activity of the UN and the Security Council. Therefore, we have the right to demand and ensure that the UN is capable of convincing one member to withdraw its military forces from the territory of another sovereign member state, and to terminate its aggression.

The UN's capacity to fulfil the expectations placed upon it cannot be dependent upon whether the said member nation chooses or not to act according to the good practices of international law. In the alternative case, the UN loses its *raison d'être*, its reason for existence. We cannot allow international law to be followed selectively and only when convenient. For them it is no longer law. Russia's behaviour in the weeks following the cessation of combat activity showed us that, unfortunately, even in the first decade of the 21st century, it is possible to refuse to adhere to international treaties, to interpret them arbitrarily, and to observe international laws only when it serves one's self-interest. A permanent member of the Security Council should be especially committed to fulfilling the principles of the UN Charter. This forces us, once more, to conclude, in the interests of the international community, that it is imperative to improve the UN's capacity to regulate and resolve conflicts. Looking at recent events, it has become quite clear how important it is to proceed with reforming the Security Council. The previous month's events in the Southern Caucasus raised another issue. Even before the armed conflict broke out, Georgia was the target of cyber-war. These were aimed at government Web sites, as well as those of news agencies and banks.

In the case of cyber attacks and cyber warfare, it is becoming ever more difficult to determine and apprehend the perpetrators. As I stated already last year at this very same rostrum, cyber attacks are an international problem, indeed a form of aggression that no nation is able to deal with on its own. Cyber attacks can be launched against any nation on any continent. And from any continent. Administering and policing the cyber-world to avoid criminal and hostile attacks requires extensive cooperation and the standardisation of relevant international regulations. I call upon all UN member nations to deal with the risks associated with cyber security with the utmost seriousness. Estonia, with extensive experience dealing with and repulsing cyber attacks is ready to contribute its expertise toward thwarting this new form of criminal warfare.

I thank you.