

Statement by H.E. Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid,

President of Estonia,

at the Food Systems Summit

23 September 2021

New York

Excellences, dear colleagues,

Thank you for this timely meeting! We all currently witness how at least 155 million people vulnerable to conflict, economic shocks and extreme weather face acute hunger. Unfortunately, as The Global Report on Food Crises 2021 shows, the pandemic has dramatically exacerbated the situation.

The whole society, including youth, media, and the private and third sectors need to work hard towards achieving the SDG-s. We have to be ambitious. We have to find smart solutions. Especially when transforming the ways the world produces and consumes food.

I agree with the Secretary-General: food systems must be central in our efforts to achieve the SDG-s. And, we must address the root causes and main drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition worldwide, in particular poverty, inequalities, climate change, biodiversity loss, forced migration and conflicts.

As the UN Global Advocate for Every Woman Every Child, I want to emphasize the need to take into account the wellbeing and rights of the most vulnerable when making decisions about food. Nutrition insecurity affects women and children the most, especially since still in many societies, even in the most developed ones, women and girls tend to be in charge of putting food on their families tables.

Yet we see how the lack of nutrition security contributes to maternal mortality. Yet, nutrition insecurity, and outdated norms in societies restrain women from

breastfeeding. Yet, 2 children out of 3 aged from 6 to 23 months are not fed even the minimum diverse diet needed to grow healthy, and the youngest of them – from 6 to 11 months – have the least diverse diets. Yet, the pandemic deprived many children from perhaps their only meal of the day, the school meal, without offering a replacement.

Dear colleagues,

Prevention needs to come first, so that our future grown-ups would not need treatment for the consequences of hunger or a poor diet. We must tackle climate change, ensure access to food and nutrition to people in need, and patiently work on better gender equality to reach zero hunger by 2030.

Estonia stands ready to be part of the change that is needed to transform the food systems and achieve the 2030 Agenda.