

STATEMENT BY ESTONIA

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ESTONIA**

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour to be able to join you at the UNCTAD 11th Conference on its 40th anniversary. On behalf of the Estonian Government, I would like to extend the greetings on this occasion and congratulate Brazil for hosting this event at such an important milestone.

The years since the previous UNCTAD Conference in 2000 are marked with a solid sequence of events bridging us today from the past. Estonia has been integral part of this, and the prospects for further co-operation are promising from the viewpoint of a new European Union member state. I am confident that the benefits of this co-operation will reach not only a few countries but the whole international community.

Estonia associates itself with the statement by Mr Tom Kitt, the Minister of State for Development Cooperation and Human Rights of Ireland, on behalf of the European Union. I would additionally like to focus briefly on one of the aspects of the fourth subtheme of the Conference - Partnership for Development, namely on exchange of best practices and experiences in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

UNCTAD has relentlessly addressed the issues of trade and development, including those of ICT and digital divide, and has provided analytical support to developing countries in their pursuit for improved policy options. For example, the UNCTAD programmes for Investment, Technology and Enterprise Development have and continue to serve this cause. With the growing importance of ICT and considerable impact on economic growth and competitiveness, it represents an increasingly important factor in the development policy. In this respect UNCTAD's actions are very timely and should increasingly involve co-operation in the field of formulating and implementing of national ICT policies in the developing countries.

UNCTAD has already provided a valuable platform for exchange of best practices and experience in the ICT area. This format should be further employed and built upon to make the exchange in this field more recipient and result-oriented and responsive to the development needs. Member countries bring to UNCTAD valuable lessons, both successes and failures, and create a unique pool of knowledge. The present lessons in the ICT area conclude that the countries developing faster have also been able to accumulate more extensive ICT expertise. It would be a net 'Loss to all, if this expertise is not made available and put into use. We encourage UNCTAD to use its existing tools and expertise to improve the transfer of knowledge and best practices among its members.

Allow me to bring our own example of such activity. Estonia is an UNCTAD member country that has over the recent years made the accumulated IT expertise successfully available nation-wide in order to build a fairly modern information society. Almost half of the population

regularly uses the Internet, 38% have a computer at home, 80% have a mobile phone, 62% use Internet banking. By value, more than 80% of banking transactions, including those of enterprises, are made through Internet banking. Estonians communicate with government and municipal authorities through the Internet and use the digital signature. These numbers are of European average at the time when Estonia's GDP is still far below European average and that might make Estonian experience especially interesting for developing countries.

The success in case of Estonia lies, importantly, in the good co-operation of public, private and non-governmental sector. Our positive lessons have been shared with several transition and developing countries to help them take advantage of new technologies and provide theirs with know-how in the development of easily accessible and user-friendly solutions.

We are willing to continue sharing our experience with more countries - and I am convinced that we are not alone in this readiness - and call upon the UNCTAD to tap into that kind of resources more actively. UNCTAD's presence in this aspect of multilateral co-operation would strengthen the prospects for technology use to the benefit of both developed and developing countries alike.

Thank you for your attention.