



Mission of Estonia
to the United Nations



Republic of Estonia
Statement by Ms. Liis Lipre-Järma
On the agenda item 83
“The rule of law at the national and international level”

Estonia aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the EU.

In addition I would like to make the following remarks:

The high-level meeting and declaration adopted on the rule of law illustrates the progress towards unity and agreement on fundamental values.

We welcome that the declaration adopted reflects the important role of the International Criminal Court and the necessity to cooperate with the Court. As it celebrates its tenth anniversary, the International Criminal Court enjoys increased international trust. An impressive number of 121 countries – six less than 2/3 of the UN member states, have already ratified the Rome Statute. Estonia calls upon all countries that have not yet done so, to join the Rome Statute and to co-operate with the Court.

It is also crucial to ratify amendments to the Rome Statute on the crime of aggression adopted in Kampala. Two countries: Liechtenstein and Samoa have led this process by example and completed the ratification process. Estonia pledged at the high-level meeting on rule of law in September 2012 to pursue ratifying the amendments by the end of 2013.

We commend the commitment by the United Nations to the ICC, especially its continued cooperation with it by providing logistical support for its field operations and submitting documents to the Prosecutor and Defence Council.

We should also not forget that it is a primary duty of every state to exercise criminal jurisdiction over those responsible for international crimes, and to provide effective remedies to victims of past violations, including reparations for the harm suffered. The ICC will only step in where national jurisdictions are unable or unwilling to act.

That brings me to the issue of the necessity to have in place national capacities to investigate and prosecute serious international crimes. It is important that justice and development communities cooperate in designing development programmes with focus on justice for grave international crimes. It is essential, because those responsible for the worst human rights violations are often the very same ones who, by fuelling networks of corruption and organized crime, keep societies in a poverty trap.

Justice, whether delivered by domestic or international institutions, is a necessary prerequisite for sustainable development and security in a post-conflict society. Impunity provides fertile ground for the recurrence of conflicts and breeds instability. Thus it is no coincidence that the World Development Report of 2011 refers to transitional justice as one of the core tools to avert cycles of violence. We are glad that there is a separate paragraph in the outcome document on the rule of law on transitional justice. It is, however, necessary to ensure that informal justice mechanisms do not preclude access to the formal justice system for those that need or desire it and that the serious international crimes, including gender – based crimes, are dealt with only within the formal justice system.

Let me also remind you of the contribution of civil society organizations. It is regrettable that their contribution was not acknowledged in the declaration adopted at the HLM on the rule of law. We must ensure that national voices are systematically heard and placed at the centre of rule of law efforts. The contribution of civil society is essential in this regard.

Mr. Chairman

Only a society based on the rule of law has the necessary means to offer better living conditions for its people, prevent corruption, and cure the ills that result. Economists have repeatedly found that the better the rule of law, the better off the nation. The recent experience of my own country

illustrate this point. The information revolution we experience these days has assisted Estonia to successfully and rapidly transform itself into a rule of law based, democratic society. Electronic solutions increase transparency and help to prevent and cut down corruption. And they reduce costs. Most importantly, however, they have increased the possibility to exercise fundamental rights and freedoms and improve inclusive and responsible governance. We know well from our experience in the 90s that even in modest circumstances, it is possible to implement IT solutions and to re-establish or increase the trust of citizens towards the state. This becomes especially essential in post-conflict societies, where the lack of trust and participation provides fertile ground for the recurrence of conflicts. Therefore Estonia wishes to share its E-governance skills and experiences and to continue to facilitate exchanges with partners worldwide.

Since 2000 the Government of Estonia has held its meetings paperless. In that connection let me commend the UN secretariat for its paperless approach here in the 6th Committee. It is not only environmentally friendly, but has the potential for tremendous cost saving. Estonia hopes that the 6th Committee will lead by example on this matter to other members of the UN family.
