

Second World Summit for Social Development
Plenary Statement of the Republic of Estonia, delivered by Permanent Representative of
Estonia to the UN, H.E. Mr. Rein Tammsaar
Doha, Qatar
4-6 November 2025

Your Excellencies,

Allow me to start by thanking the State of Qatar for hosting this historic Summit and commend Qatar for its excellent organisation.

Estonia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and would like to add the following in its national capacity.

Thirty years after the first World Summit for Social Development, we meet again with a shared purpose to reaffirm our collective commitment to building a fairer, more resilient, and humane world. The principles enshrined in the **Political Declaration** adopted a few days ago remind us that poverty eradication, promotion of full and productive employment and decent work for all, and social integration can only advance hand in hand.

Estonia's national **Welfare Development Plan 2030**, aligned with the **Sustainable Development Goals**, sets out our strategic vision for reducing poverty, increasing employment, and building a more equal society.

Estonia's social policy focuses on lifespan-wide **prevention** and comprehensive support. Our experience shows that while prevention is most effective in **childhood**, it is crucial for well-being at every stage of life. Our generous and flexible **parental benefit** system ensures financial security for families from the very first days of a child's life. This is complemented by **accessible childcare** and measures that help parents balance work and family life. These measures have additionally contributed to achieving **gender equality** and helped us achieve one of the highest **women's participation rates** in the labor market in the world.

We believe that education is one of the most powerful drivers of equality and social development. In a long run, **investments in education** benefits people's health, education, employment, and the economy as whole. Estonia's **free and inclusive education system** ensures that every child - regardless of family income, location, or socioeconomic background - has access to quality learning. According to **PISA** assessments, Estonia ranks among the world's most equitable

education systems, where success in school depends on effort, not on social status. We are also preparing our education system for the future. Through our new **AI Leap program**, schools across Estonia are equipped with AI tools and skills, providing personalised learning for every student. We are open and ready to share our findings with the world, notably within the context of our partnership with the UNICEF, where Estonia currently holds a position of the vice-president of the UNICEF Executive Board Bureau. To promote full and productive employment and decent work for all, we focus on keeping people in the labour market, supporting vulnerable groups, and aligning skills with the needs of a transforming economy. We have reformed our **passive invalidity pension** by introducing activation measures, combined with targeted awareness campaigns that shift employers' attitudes and encourage them to hire people with reduced work ability. For **empowerment and financial security in older age**, Estonia's recent reforms include adjusting the retirement age in line with life expectancy, introducing flexible retirement pension scheme and providing personalized counselling on voluntary savings programmes. These reforms have led to higher employment and well-being among the target groups.

Distinguished Delegates,

Challenges of poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion cannot be solved by any country alone.

Therefore, we have offered our experience, knowledge, and partnership also to all the global partners. After regaining our independence in 1991, it took us only seven years to **transition from aid recipient to a donor-country**. And within three decades, we evolved from a transition economy into one of the world's leading **digital societies**. Digital transformation and innovation - as well as education, entrepreneurship and health care - are the main focus areas of Estonian development cooperation. Our goal is simple: to ensure that technology serves people, making governance transparent and public services accessible to everyone. We have further contributed to enhancing digital rights and closing the digital gap as a Chair of the **Freedom Online Coalition** in 2025 and will continue these efforts as member of the **Human Rights Council** in 2026-2028 as well as a co-facilitator of the UN's Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence.

Your Excellencies,

Aggression, wars and armed conflicts are directly and gravely undermining the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. Challenges of poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and human rights violations are all exacerbated by armed conflicts. Peace is therefore a major precondition for social development and social justice, be in Ukraine, Gaza or Sudan. **We call on Russia** also from this platform to stop its unjustified and unprovoked war of aggression against sovereign Ukraine. While Russia continues to kill innocent civilians, bombarding schools, kindergartens, maternity hospitals, maiming and abducting Ukrainian children, **Estonia is proudly contributing to the reconstruction of Ukraine**, building kindergartens, family homes and other infrastructure to provide social stability and give Ukrainians back human dignity and hope.

To achieve the vision set out in Copenhagen thirty years ago, we need peace, security, renewed political will and commitment, innovation and smarter policies, as well as stronger partnerships. Together, let us renew our commitment to dignity, equality, and opportunity for all.

Thank you.